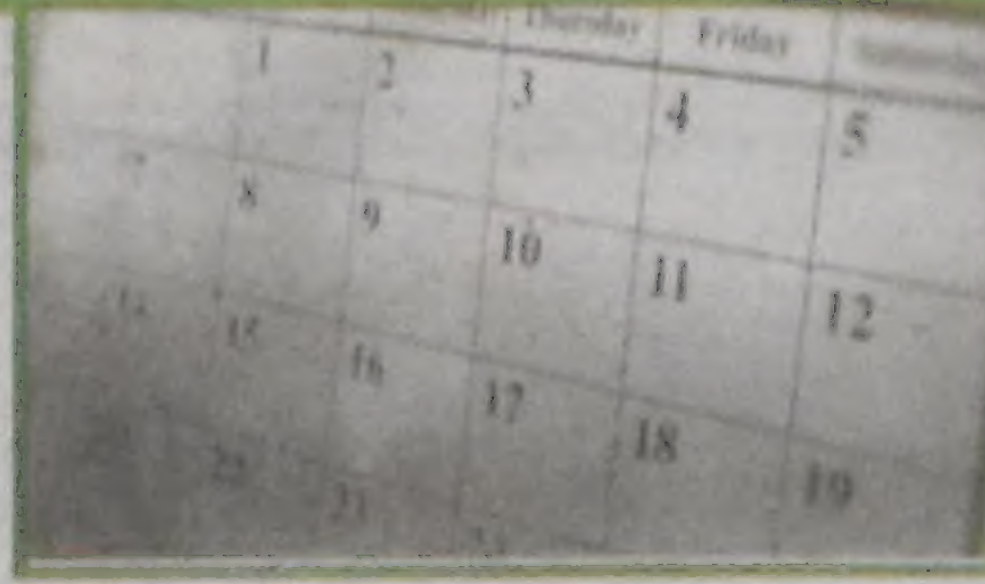




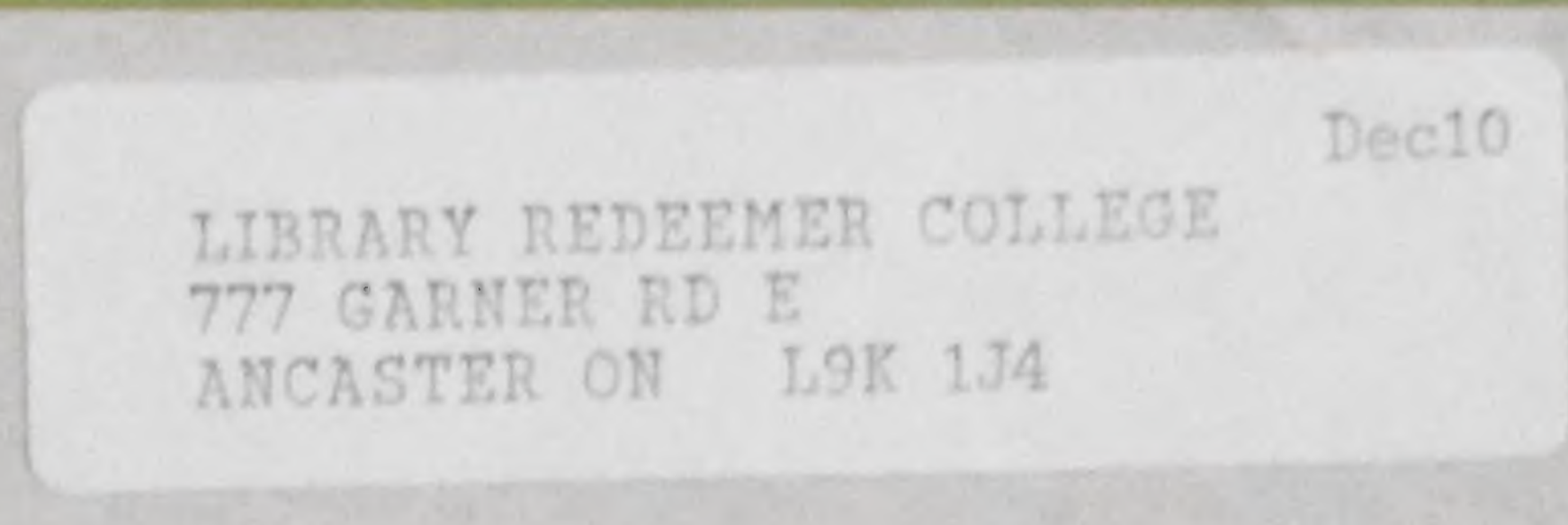
Pinery CRC
PAGE 8



Inspiration
PAGE 10



Comparing notes
PAGE 15



From broken legs to redeemed in Christ
PAGE 20

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CHRISTIANCOURIER



Our responsibility in Afghanistan goes beyond deployment

Mike Hogeterp

OTTAWA, Ontario – The conflict in Afghanistan continues at a slow and sometimes intense burn. Most Canadians, however, only think of Afghanistan when another soldier's death is announced. After almost nine years of struggle and bloodshed, there is a sense of mission fatigue and perhaps even indifference to the on-going war. This attitude among Canadians comes across in both in the media and in conversations I've had with policy makers. Conflict in Afghanistan has now gone on for a generation or more, leaving a wake of broken lives, fractured communities and damaged institutions. These circumstances mean that Canada has both urgent and long-term responsibilities in Afghanistan, regardless of military involvement.

In early 2008, Canada's Parliament established a set of mission priorities and a 2011 military withdrawal date. Initially, the goal was to leave Afghanistan a safer, more secure and better governed place. And while there have been some victories in health and human development with Canada's help (polio vaccination for example), security and governance continue to be significant challenges. According to the UN, civilian casualties are up 31 percent this year compared to

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2009, and overall security incidents have "increased significantly." Afghanistan's 2009 Presidential elections raised legitimate international concerns about corruption, which is considered as great an obstacle to peace as the insurgency. Purported 'priority programs' of the government of Afghanistan, such as the demobilization and reintegration of insurgents (which received international commitments to the tune of \$250 million early in 2010), are stalled due to lack of effective leadership. All this makes our official goal to leave Afghanistan

See **Afghanistan** on page 2



A young Afghan girl in Kabul.



Mike Wevers

EDMONTON, Alberta – When I was a young boy, an older sister gave me a scrap album with a few pictures of the English Royal Family. If I recall, it was something of a birthday gift to remind me that Queen Elizabeth was crowned in 1953, the year of my birth. But she has reigned even longer than that, as she ascended to the throne in 1952 on the death of her father King George VI. No expense was spared in preparing for her coronation, including the effort

Off with the Crown: Why Canada has outgrown its monarchist roots

to have the event broadcast for television world-wide, ushering this monarchy into the modern world.

During my elementary school years, I diligently collected newspaper clippings, *Star Weekly* pieces and *Macleans* articles about the royal family. My mom, whose Dutch heritage included an ongoing respect and awe for the Dutch royal family, encouraged this hobby. The postwar Dutch immigrants knew that Canada, the country which led the liberation of the Netherlands, also had a healthy respect for monarchy. The annual tulip festival in Ottawa is an ongoing reminder that Canada had a piece of an Ottawa hospital transformed into Dutch soil, so that when Princess Margriet of the Netherlands was born in exile there in 1943, she was born as a Dutch national.



GG Michaëlle Jean greets the true Head of State, Queen Elizabeth.



David Johnston (69), currently U. of Waterloo president, will be appointed Canada's next Governor General on October 1.

One Constitution, comes with Queen

The scrap-booking ended sometime during my junior high years when other interests beckoned, and well, you know, boys just didn't do scrap booking anymore. My interest in the Crown continued, but like many people, it was from exploring the centuries-long legacy it represented to the United Kingdom, not Canada.

When I witnessed the Queen signing the Constitution Act into law in April 1982 on Parliament Hill, I wondered why we still needed to pledge allegiance to her thereafter. This was well before 1992, the "annus horribilis," when the whole world, and the Queen herself, was trying to put distance between the Monarchy and the behaviour of her children. It is somewhat to her credit that the

See **Monarchy** on page 2

Can we "mount a peace mission with the same level of political energy and commitment as the military mission"?

News

Afghanistan *continued*

in 2011 safer and better governed sound more and more unlikely.

Critical conversation

Despite faint public musings about the possibility of extending Canada's military involvement past 2011, and subtle pressure from NATO partners to continue some form of military engagement, the government states that the military withdrawal will proceed on schedule and that any mission following 2011 will be non-military. Any revised mission would include components such as Afghan security forces training and development work. Not much has been said, so far, in public or in Parliamentary discussion about the character of the mission post-2011. Our position in Afghanistan, however, is so crucial to Canadian international policy that a broad discussion about the character of the mission is overdue. Such a discussion would engage Canadians, overcome indifference, and begin crafting a mission that can take new strides in building a lasting



A resident of Kabul.

peace in Afghanistan. In late 2009, the Canadian Council of Churches (CCC) adopted a consensus position (remarkable for a 22 member association of churches!) asking Canada "to mount a peace mission [in Afghanistan] and to accord it the same level of political energy and commitment, along with requisite material support, as has been accorded the military mission to date." The CCC specifically recommends measures to support local reconciliation and governance activities (appropriate to Afghanistan's decentralized nature), and diplomatic efforts directed at a lasting political solution to the conflict. Both of these suggestions would require significant resources and time commitments by Canada. The CCC's advice also has a non-military scope, which fits the current political climate in Canada and rises from research and discussion among the churches about the urgency of new emphases for the approach to peace in Afghanistan. The last debate (late 2007-early 2008) about the Canadian mission in Afghanistan was characterized by



A hard mission – 2,800 Canadian Forces personnel^{CBC} are currently deployed in Afghanistan. 152 have been killed since 2002.

peace in Afghanistan.

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AMINA MURAWJ ON FLICKR

polarization and oversimplified questions like "Military in or out? ... Security or development focus?" As Canada considers its responsibilities following 2011, the questions and the tone of the debate need to be focused more squarely on the needs of the Afghan people. To this end, as Parliament returns, it would be valuable to have a thoughtful public dialogue on the mission that gathers the perspectives of the following groups: Afghans themselves; development, civil society organizations and faith groups; the civil service, including the military, and policy makers. A thoughtful dialogue among these voices can form the basis of a meaningful Canadian role in Afghanistan now and following 2011.

Mike Hogeterp is staff person for the Committee for Contact with Government (CCG) of the CRC in Canada and one of the authors of the CCC brief on Afghanistan. For more on CCG's work, see page 9.

**Monarchy** *continued*

Monarchy survived those turbulent times, such that by the time her Golden Jubilee arrived a decade later, most of the

world genuinely celebrated with her.

The rightful Head of State

Canadians also celebrated with their Queen, basking in the glow of her regained confidence in the few visits she makes to this part of her realm. Increasingly, however, Canadians participate in these visits more out of respect for Queen Elizabeth as an inspiring figure than out of recognition that she is our head of state.

Last year, our Prime Minister had to remind Governor General Michaëlle Jean that she was only the vice-regal representative of Canada's head of state – Queen Elizabeth – after the GG twice referred to herself as Canada's head of state in speech to UNESCO. The GG designate, Mr. David Johnston, a respected lawyer and academic with years of public service, has already been more careful, stating that "as the representative of the Queen of Canada, who is our country's head of state, I pledge to be a stalwart defender of our Canadian heritage, of Canadian institutions and of the Canadian people."

Monarchists were up in arms about the GG Jean's impropriety. Instead, Canadians should have been up in arms about the reminder that a Queen from a foreign land

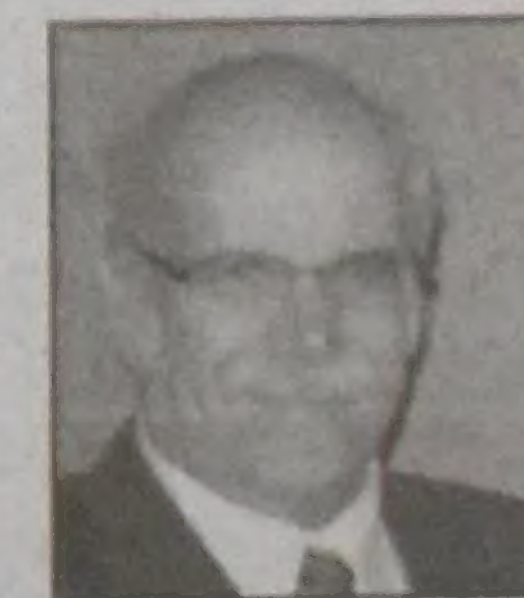
remains our head of state. Some people want an end to the monarchy in Canada before the bumbling Prince Charles becomes King. But even the more likable Prince William should not be in line to be Canada's head of state; that role belongs to a Canadian. Our country's true claim to independence is circumscribed by our allegiance to the Queen of another land.

The end in sight?

If we move to end monarchical reign in Canada, we will be in the company of other Commonwealth partners. Leading politicians in Australia and New Zealand, both government and opposition, have recently given voice to ending monarchy rule in their countries. All countries would remain in the Commonwealth, and recognize the Queen as the head of *it*, but not as their country's head of state. This is already the case for some Commonwealth countries, including India, its most populace nation.

All Commonwealth nations look forward to the Diamond Anniversary of Queen Elizabeth's rule in 2012. As the end of her rule nears, it may be Canada's chance to assert its true independence assuming all manners of state entirely within our own borders. Governor General Johnston, whose installation we welcome on October 1, should be the last GG appointed by a foreign head of state, even if it is at the recommendation of our Prime Minister. So that when my grandchildren have the opportunity to search through boxes of memorabilia stored in our crawl space and find my scrap album, I hope I can explain to them that the album has some fine pictures and articles Opa saved about a family from another country who were important, but who no longer rule our Canada.

Mike Wevers recently retired as Assistant Deputy Minister with the Alberta Government's Treasury Board. He lives in Edmonton.

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PMO OFFICE

News

Russia's prisons look to faiths to bring moral guidance

Sophia Kishkovsky

MOSCOW (ENI) – Russia's prisons, struggling with a growing crime rate, overcrowding and shortfalls in funding, are turning to religion to bring moral guidance to inmates. The move marks a dramatic change from the Soviet system, when clergy and believers were often imprisoned for their faith. "We have signed agreements with all of the leading confessions of our country," said Aleksandr Reimer, director of Russia's Federal Correctional Service, in an interview with the Rossiiskaya Gazeta, an official government newspaper. Although the Russian Orthodox Church has become increasingly close to the State in recent years, Reimer said that imposing Russia's largest religion on inmates was not the goal.

"Right now we're preparing an agreement with Buddhists," Reimer was quoted as saying. "We're providing everyone with access. We're building churches, mosques and synagogues."



Moscow's Jewish Community Centre

In July, at a ceremony at Moscow's Jewish Community Centre, run by the Orthodox Jewish Chabad-Lubavitch movement, a branch of Hasidism, Reimer signed an agreement on opening synagogues and Jewish prayer rooms in prisons with Aleksandr Boroda, president of the Federation of Jewish Communities of Russia.

After the ceremony, the two men staved off media questions about how many Jews are in Russian prisons, saying they have no such statistics. Russia's Jewish community is flourishing, in contrast to the State-sponsored persecution of Jews in the Soviet era, but anti-Semitism is still seen as a problem.

Reimer and Boroda said that synagogues had already been opened at two correctional facilities in the Arkhangelsk region in northwestern Russia. In addition, a Jewish prayer room has been created in the Volga River region of Saratov. The agreement also calls for the Federation of Jewish Communities to provide humanitarian aid, such as food and medicine, to prisoners. Reimer said in his Rossiiskaya Gazeta interview that the correctional service had started a pilot project with the Russian Orthodox Church in four regions of Russia to introduce prison chaplains. He said practical issues needed to be resolved such as whether priests would be on staff and paid by the prisons, or by the Russian Orthodox Church.

For now, while there are churches in prisons and prison camps across Russia, priests visit with varying regularity, said Reimer. "It all depends on how specific priests fulfil their responsibilities," he said. "Neither representatives of confessions, nor we today, have the goal of forcing everyone to go to church. Why should we engage in such sacrilege? If an inmate has come to faith, we think that it could stop him from committing a crime in the future."

The Holy Synod of the Russian Orthodox Church has for its part created a department on prison ministry. The Moscow Patriarchate has already worked extensively with prisons in recent years on many fronts. Last year the patriarchate's external relations department held a three-day seminar for clergy and church social workers who provide pastoral care for HIV-infected prisoners.

At Prison Colony No. 7 near Veliky Novgorod, a historic city famous for its churches, a small wooden church built by inmates stands in the centre of the prison grounds. Vladimir Lazarenko, a wizened man in his 50s, told a visiting reporter in 2008 that he had returned to God in prison. "I was a believer from childhood, but I got lost and got in trouble," said Lazarenko, who was convicted of killing his father. "Here I remembered about God."

The WEIRD long census form

The Canadian government has always required all Canadians to complete a short census form every five years. For many years, it has also legally required one random fifth of Canadians to fill out a detailed census form, one that contains many social, economic, cultural, and other questions. The government has now made this long form voluntary. This move from mandatory to voluntary has produced a stormy sea of discussion, much of it negative. As a professor who has taught statistics, as a scientist and as a Christian, I can appreciate why the head of Stats Canada felt he had to resign in protest to the changes being implemented. He is completely right in saying that a voluntary long form has a number of serious statistical problems.

People-counting in the Bible is clearly a significant exercise and is sometimes appropriate, sometimes not. Numbers is a God-mandated census of Israel before entering the Promised Land, and in 2 Samuel 24 David takes a census when he should not. In the New Testament it is Caesar's order for a census that brings Joseph and Mary to Bethlehem. These examples make it clear that census taking is something that humans have been doing for a long time, and that there are legitimate reasons for governments to collect this type of information, which like all human activity can be abused.

The Canadian government has discovered, too, that the way people are counted matters. Its move to change the census by making the detailed census voluntary rather than mandatory has received widespread condemnation from other levels of government, various policy groups, statisticians and researchers, and even from Canadian churches. They argue that making this survey voluntary will significantly reduce the quality of the data and make policy planning much more difficult. Over the years, I have enjoyed teaching statistics to both undergraduate and graduate psychology students. In my research, statistics is a necessary tool, and I cannot imagine how science could advance without the use of some form of statistical tools.

Not representative

In Psychology one of the terms that has recently become a shorthand way of discussing a research problem is to say that most research is done with people who are WEIRD: Western, Educated, Industrialized,

Rich and Democratic. We are finding that properties we once thought were universal among humans (such as optical illusions, perception of justice, or the perception of risk) are in fact related to the specific characteristics of the participants, particularly the society or culture from which they come. First-year undergraduate students, who are the participants in most human psychology research, are, on many dimensions, NOT reflective of the population in general. In a variety of studies, it turns out that WEIRD participants are different from people who come from small non-industrialized cultures. One of the criticisms of psychology is that it is a science of first-year undergraduate students, not of humans.

The long form census, as it becomes voluntary, is more likely to be completed by WEIRD Canadians than by people who are marginalized, such as recent immigrants, the poor, people with mental health issues, and others who are vulnerable. As a consequence, we will not have an accurate picture of Canadians. The WEIRD population (which include most CC subscribers) will be overrepresented, and those who most need help will be underrepresented. Moreover, it will be impossible to determine which of those received the long form actually did fill it out, so we will not know how large the bias will be. The 2011 long-form data will thus be much less useful to all the people who currently use it to make planning decisions. It will not be comparable to previous years' data, so plotting trends will be difficult.

If as a church we want to mount a program to help the poor, decide where to put a new church plant, or make any one of many similar decisions, we will not have the accurate data that has been available in the past. This is why Canadian churches have joined others in asking the government to rethink its decision. Most decisions benefit from good data, and Stats Canada has a long history of providing high quality data about Canadians, partially because they can do a mandatory census rather than a survey. While there may be some issues with the current procedures (the law threatens prison for non-compliance, but it has never happened) it appears in this case the government has thrown out the baby with the bath-water.

Rudy Eikelboom (reikelboom@wlu.ca) is chair and professor of psychology at Wilfrid Laurier University in Waterloo, Ontario.



For an update on Christian Reformed World Missions' work in Russia, see page 20.

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Editorials

The secret of a long marriage



Bert Witvoet

To be married for 50 years is a long time, but it's not a rare phenomenon. The healthcare system being what it is, more and more married couples stay healthy long enough to reach that milestone. On the other hand, the divorce rate being what it is, it is a rare thing. My wife, Alice, and I are fortunate to have gotten this far in our marital journey, and, if you add our five years of courtship, you can say that we have been an item for 55 years. We are truly blessed.

Some people who congratulated us called it an achievement. I personally don't share that thought. For it to be an achievement we would have to take credit for the health we enjoy and the good loving relationship we enjoy as couple. For it to be an achievement others whose marriages fall apart must be considered failures. That would be a slap in the face for those who tried valiantly to hold things together, but were up against incredible odds. Alice and I look upon our good fortune as a gift. There is effort involved in staying married, of course. But I would place it in the same category as Paul's statement "Work out your own salvation in fear and trembling." Marriages must also be worked out in fear and trembling, because the enemy of faithfulness is prowling about like a roaring divorce lawyer.

Advice for the romantics

Three years ago, Alice and I were visiting the Cango Caves at Oudshoorn, South Africa. The stalactites (hanging from the ceiling) and stalagmites (rising from the floor), some of them hundreds of thousands of years old, provided some fascinating scenes. In one room the guide pointed out a formation that he referred to as "the bridal bed." It looked real with its "bedposts" and "canopy." He took the opportunity to single out a young couple who were on their honeymoon. He invited them to spend the night there, but they declined. I couldn't blame them. A few minutes earlier, when we were in another large cave, he had turned out the lights for half a minute. You wouldn't believe the utter darkness of that place. The guide then unexpectedly asked Alice a question. (He had previously found out from Alice where we were from and how long we had been married.) He asked Alice if she had any advice for the young couple.

Having had no time to reflect on that question, Alice just blurted out "You have to forgive each other a lot." Her answer surprised the people around her, including me. I thought she would have waxed eloquent about the need to love each other a lot. But then I realized she was so right . . . and so practical. Love is the essential ingredient, of course, but without the ability to forgive each other no marriage can last. The guide looked at me and asked what according to me the secret of our long marriage was. I told him I couldn't improve on my wife's answer. I don't know whether Alice blew the young couple's romantic notion of love out of the water, but I have an idea that the more experienced lovers in our group understood.

The rope of commitment

Alice's statement reminded me of an article written by Kevin DeYoung, a pastor in a Reformed Church in Lansing, Michigan. He wrote about the unrealistic notion of being a Christian without being a member of a church: "It's immaturity actually," he said, and then he added a comparison to reinforce his idea: "like the newly engaged couple who think romance preserves the marriage, when the couple celebrating their golden anniversary know it's the institution of marriage that preserves the romance."

The pastor is so right. Marriages cannot survive when all you've got is romantic love. You need "agape" love, sacrificial love. But even more than that, you need a structure of accountability. When a Christian couple marry, they make their promises of fidelity before God and his people. God is the third partner. They embrace the teaching that marriage is "a divine ordinance" and that it was "instituted by God himself at the very dawn of history" (Marriage Form in the *Psalter Hymnal* of the Christian Reformed Church). They know that they are in it for the long haul, until death separates them.

I can speak from experience that to stay together for 50 or more years takes more than a slender thread of romance. It takes a sturdy rope of commitment. You discover soon enough that, in order to stay in the marriage boat, you must believe in the voyage, and you must obey the Captain. You have to respect the purpose for marriage, and you have to forgive each other a lot. Within that realm of accountability your love, even romantic love, will flourish. Outside of it, you might end up sleeping in a calcified drip-bed of stalactites and stalagmites in a very, very dark cave. ✕

Why I shop local



Cathy Smith

When I shop local, I'm in good company. You might even assume that I am being eco-responsible. But I really don't know that much about the food industry. I haven't read *The 100-Mile Diet: A Year of Local Eating* by Smith and MacKinnon or *Animal, Vegetable, Miracle* by Barbara Kingsolver.

No, I shop local because I am a Christian. For me, shopping at Wyoming Foodland has nothing to do with where their produce originates, and everything to do with obeying the second greatest commandment summarized by Jesus: "Love your neighbour as yourself" (Mt. 22:39). If I am going to identify myself as a Christian in my little town, I have a responsibility to act in loving ways towards my neighbour, including the people at my local grocery store.

Mutual support

I distinctly remember shopping there as a kid with my mom. In 1969, the store was called the *Red and White*, and I always got a kick out of parking our red and white 1958 Chevy Biscayne station wagon there. It would have made such a classy postcard. The *Red and White* was cramped, dim, and, frankly, kind of dirty. Thankfully, the store has undergone a lot of modernization since then. There was also a Dutch store in Wyoming at that time, so we made two stops each week. Today the Dutch store is gone, but Wyoming Foodland still stocks the requisite favourites from the old country. I'm not sure if importing Maggi Seasoning and Honig Noodles from Holland impacts global warming, but I can't make my Sunday soup without them!

Our local grocery store plays an important role in our community. Over the years, hundreds of teens, including my son, have been employed there to slice deli meat, pack the groceries, mop the floor and do carry-outs. What's important to them, no doubt, is that they've earned some money for education or sports or clothes. But they also learned critical work habits such as diligence, punctuality, grooming, courtesy and tolerance. If they had any interest in retail or marketing, they can observe responsible business practices modelled by the local owners. This alone, this gift of employment for young people in our own community, is enough to ensure my patronage for years to come.

Small-town atmosphere

But there's more. Like any local grocery store, Wyoming Foodland caters to a certain elderly and disadvantaged clientele who do not drive, but must walk or use a scooter to get their groceries. The cashiers know these folks by name. There is cheerful patience for the little old lady digging nickels out of her wallet and a friendly hello for the man who visits the store every single day of the week because he is lonely. Foodland staff deliver groceries to the home of the senior citizen who lives behind me. This kind of personal service is a hallmark of small town life, and it inspires me to spend my dollars locally.

Our Foodland store pays taxes here. The owners live here. They support other local businesses, schools and charities here. A variety of local clubs and organizations camp out by the front door of Foodland, soliciting support. The Scouts sell apples and the guys from the Lions Club, wearing their blue vests, hawk their hotdogs, hamburgers, and raffle tickets to install playground equipment in our local parks. When, tragically, a young teenager lost her life in our hometown, her friends and family had a BBQ in front of the store to help raise funds for unexpected travel expenses. I am happy to support them all. They all get a smile and a loonie or two. They are my neighbours.

In the grocery store, I meet former students, classmates from high school, old acquaintances. Sometimes I meet people from my church. I meet my mom and my sister. Each encounter is an opportunity – to smile, to exchange hellos, to inquire after a sick relative, to share news about kids and grandkids. Each encounter is a brief moment to love my neighbour. And this is love, make no mistake. There is no greater gift you can give someone than to acknowledge his or her presence. I see you. I know you. I care about you.

Shop local. Build community. And if it helps reduce the carbon footprint, I've got no problem with that. ✕

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is a retired teacher living in Wyoming, Ontario.

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Canada

Letters

Giving the land to Israel

Maybe, like me, you have read passages of Scripture numerous times and suddenly a particular verse takes on new meaning. Some time ago, I had such an experience when reading Genesis 12:7 and Genesis 15:18. I had previously ignored the significance and implication of that common word "give." With only a negligible variation in those verses God promises Abraham, "To your offspring I will give this land." Read those verses as if the word "give" is spelled in capital letters. God promises Abraham a gift. Now the nature of a gift is that you don't have to do anything for it. When I was a child, I received gifts for my birthday; I even got them when perhaps I really did not deserve them. One could make a case that Abraham's descendants did not deserve a gift.

The books of Exodus, Numbers and Deuteronomy are filled with complaints by the Israelites before they will receive the gift promised to Abraham. When the Israelites grumbled after the first exploration of Canaan (Numbers 13), they not only were punished for it, but they also tried to enter the land without God's approval (Numbers 14). They had forgotten that God would give it to them; they were supposed to receive the land as a gift. God used a method he had already shown in the parting of the Red Sea.

When the Israelites tried to enter Canaan for a second time, under Joshua's leadership, the first city they "conquered," Jericho, was a gift. While there was some ritual Israel had to undertake, they didn't have to fight; the walls of the city crumbled. The warrior was not the Israelites, but God, as Mennonite theologian Millard C. Lind intimated in his book, *Yahweh is a Warrior* (Scottsdale: Kitchener: Herald Press, 1980). For pacifists this is an uncomfortable notion. However, those who suggest that warfare may, therefore, be practised in some circumstances, e.g. in a just war, should realize that this is an incorrect deduction: it is God's prerogative to be a warrior, but it is, therefore, not our right to be a warrior. Through sin people have arrogated to themselves the notion that they may wage war. Moreover, God's method of waging war differs from that of human beings. If people want to justify warfare, they cannot justify it on the basis that God is a warrior; they will have to do it on a different basis.

Right after the fall of Jericho, the Israelites

deviate from God's giving. The disaster at Ai and the human trickery in taking it emphasize the human nature of warfare. Throughout the books of Joshua, Judges, Samuel and Kings there is a gradual increase in the human side; God is gradually left out of the account. With the use of the ark against the Philistines the Israelites have become like the nations around them, even before they asked for a king. By using the ark the Israelites have made God like the gods of neighbouring nations. God states that his ways are not our ways, and that counts also for war.

Is there perhaps a "lesson" for today? Many North American Christians, influenced by un-Calvinistic premillennial dispensationalism, have interpreted modern Israel's reoccupation of the land as a fulfilment of God's ancient promise. There are at least two problems with this interpretation. First of all, in Genesis 17, God again not only promises Abraham's descendants the land, he also states that his descendants must keep the covenant. The Babylonian exile indicates that the covenant was not being kept. In various ways Jesus made it clear that at least the leaders did not keep the covenant. Their superficial keeping of the commandments earned them the sobriquet of hypocrites. The second exile, after Bar Kokhba's revolt of 135, is a further indication that the notion of "everlasting possession" must be held with great care. It seems to me that the land promised to Abraham was given on account of his faith, something quite missing from most modern Jews.

Secondly, although one can hardly object to Jews wanting to live in Palestine, considering, for example, the policy practised by the Canadian government before World War II, as poignantly described by Irving Arbella and Harold Troper in *None Is Too Many: Canada and the Jews of Europe 1933-1948*, having them live in Palestine created an impossible situation for the British, under whose mandate Palestine fell, and it was indefensible for the Palestinians. Consequently, the establishment of modern Israel as a state took place by means of modern violence. Israel certainly did not follow God's method of the gift. And questionable eschatology prevents many Christians from doing justice to Palestinians, especially Christian Palestinians.

Bert den Boggende
Brooks, Alberta

Where is the church?

I was so glad to read Bert's editorial in the CC of August 23, about the Israeli/Palestinian issue. I get so discouraged having to defend the rights of the Palestinians, without being thought an anti-semitic. (Disagreeing with a country's policy does not make one a racist.) Let me tell you a tale that happened 15 or so years ago in the school where I taught. We were having our annual special emphasis week. That year's topic was the Middle East. One of our guest speakers was a wizened old Palestinian Anglican pastor. The kids loved him and began to call him Opa. (He was delighted.) One day I found him staring out a window on a landing, and I saw tears pouring down his cheeks. I asked, "Opa, has someone said something to hurt you?" Through his tears he smiled at me. "No, everyone has been most kind. But we told our problems to the locals. They didn't listen. We took them to the press. They didn't listen. We cried out to the churches in the West, and they did not listen. We cried out to the UN, and they did not listen. And now I come here, and the children, they listen. That is why I weep."

Needless to say, my tears joined his.

The Christians in Palestine feel hopelessly abandoned by their fellow Christians. "Where is the church?" they cry. Bishop Tutu, who was in South Africa during Apartheid, once said openly that the fate of

the Palestinians at the hands of the Israelis was worse than Apartheid. Yes, Hamas does nasty things. But they are not the only ones. In his book *I Shall Not Hate*, Dr. Izzeldin Abuelaish, who for many years worked side by side with Israeli doctors, tells how Israeli soldiers would drive tanks into their village and aim at a house. Sometimes they would sit there and laugh while the residents cowered; sometimes they would shoot, killing the residents. This doctor lost three daughters and a much-loved niece in one such incident.

I ache for Israel who needs a homeland, but they no longer can lay claim to Israel, even if the UN gave it to them in a fit of (well-deserved) global guilt. God gave it to them, but he also took it from them, and dispersed them. Palestinians, who occupied the land for 1500 years, got stuck in what amounts to ghettos, where food, electricity, water and other necessities are scarce because they are blockaded on all sides. The doctor's wife went to show her children the house her father had built for them, but she was not allowed any closer than the fence because it was now in the Israeli sector.

By all means, feel for the Israelis. But save some sympathy for the too-often forgotten Palestinians, both Christian and Muslim.

Coby Veenstra
St. Catharines, Ontario

Dangerous theology

Your statement in your editorial "Whose side are you standing on?" (CC August 23) that God would have taken care of [fulfilling his promise to Jacob] in his own way, and that he rejected Rebecca and Jacob's way of doing it is presumptuous. Did God not fulfill his promises by using Rebecca and Jacob in the way they acted?

Genesis 17 describes the covenant that God made with Abraham and his descendants as everlasting. I have not seen any evidence that God has changed that. But God warned the Jews that, if they disobeyed him, they would be judged and scattered among the Gentiles. Jeremiah 31:31-37 states the

renewal of the Old Testament covenant. Your article seems to suggest a replacement theology, which believes that the Jews have been replaced by the church. This theology has had murderous implications.

A book by John Hagee *Jerusalem Countdown* describes in Chapter 7 the centuries of mistreatment [of Jews] by Christians and others, in particular by Martin Luther who made a vicious Jew-hating statement, which was used by the Nazis to kill and exterminate Jews. Martin Luther died two days after writing his tract.

Jan R. Dykstra
Ormond Beach, Florida



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News

Only a click away: CRC presents fall 'webinars'

GRAND RAPIDS, Mich. (CRCNA) – Starting now, Internet users can participate in a series of "webinars" (seminars on the World Wide Web) on a range of ministry-related topics. Sponsored by the Christian Reformed Church in North America, the webinars run from this month through December.

Topics include leadership, Islam, the need for word and deed ministry, becoming involved in local or worldwide missions, a description of and look at how well the CRC is meeting its "millennium development goals," and how churches decide with whom to partner for programs and outreach efforts.

This the first time that a large number of the denominational agencies and offices have joined to coordinate a web-based series. The webinars are free and only require that participants have an email address, access to the Internet and a telephone.

Interactive

Webinars are interactive, meaning the listener/viewer can ask questions of the person presenting the information. "Sometimes this is done by typing [questions] in or, if it's a small group, the presenter will open the phone lines for a phone discussion. It's fun and interactive..., almost like 'being there' in person," according to a press release about the series.

After registering for a webinar participants will receive an email with a website link, a phone number and an access code. When the time comes for the webinar to begin, the participant must simply double-click on the website link and dial the phone number given in the original email. A voice will ask for the access code and then, after giving it, the participant is "in."

"Everything the presenter wants you to see will appear on your screen, and everything you need to hear will come through the phone lines," says the press release. All of the webinars take place on Wednesdays. Start times are in the Eastern time zone.

The schedule of topics is:

- Sept. 22, noon: "Challenging the Stereotypical Mindset of Missions"
- Oct. 6, 7:30 p.m.: "Ministry in Word and Deed"
- Oct. 20, noon: "What are Millennium Development Goals?"
- Nov. 3, 7:30 p.m.: "New Life Leadership Axioms"
- Nov. 17, noon: "Partnering Essentials"
- Dec. 1, noon: "God or Allah? Similarities and Differences Between Christianity and Islam"

For further descriptions, details and registration information visit www.crcna.org/MissionWebinars.

CRC develops 'healthy church' survey

GRAND RAPIDS, Mich. (CRCNA) – The Christian Reformed Church in North America is creating a survey that congregations in the denomination can use to assess their own health. A mix of 10 congregations – small, large, urban and rural, in both Canada and the United States – were involved in a pilot program that tested the value and content of the survey. Comments and reactions from the churches have helped the developers of the survey to revise and expand it.

"We created our own 'Healthy Church Index.' This survey will help us engage with our churches on issues of health," said Sandy Johnson, director of denominational ministries for the CRC. The survey's value is enhanced for churches if a trained coach helps them as they interpret its results and apply its conclusions, said Johnson.

Synod 2006 approved the request of the CRC board of trustees to support a "healthy church initiative." Support included setting aside ministry-share funds for creating and sustaining healthy congregations. Besides the healthy church survey, the initiative has involved creation of a "Sustaining Congregational Excellence" project, through which smaller congregations have been able obtain grants for projects that can help foster a church's health and growth.

The survey includes 11 characteristics of a healthy church. These include the centrality of God's Word to the congregation, joyful worship, commitment to evangelistic growth and church planting, and outreach to the poor and marginalized. The difference between this survey and those available from other sources is that a church is asked to measure itself against its own accomplishments and priorities.

"The magic of this survey is it starts a process of assessing the health of a church through honest self-knowledge," said Rodger Rice, director emeritus of Calvin College's Center for

Social Research and a member of the group working on the survey. Churches are not asked to measure themselves against a national norm. Rather, the survey focuses on the individual church, encouraging it and its members to look at "the gaps between church perception and personal practices," said Rice.

"This survey helps a church answer the question, 'Are you measuring up to what you expect in your church and where you are with God?'" said Stan Koster, a Christian Reformed Home Missions church development specialist who has been part of the group working on the survey.

The survey also encourages churches to celebrate their gifts and successes. The survey has begun to be used by some congregations and will be widely available soon, said Jack Tacoma, a ministry specialist for Home Missions and one of those who worked on the survey. One church involved in the pilot study, he said, realized that it would be helpful to undertake a 40-day program of prayer to help enhance the health of church and its members.

"The survey helps a church do a sketch in time and determine what things they might want to put into place as they consider healthy church planning," said Koster. "The first thing is that the survey helps a congregation know who it is so that it can move honestly into the process of conversation.... We want the entire congregation to have ownership in this."

Michael Bruinooge, director of The Network, said they examined several other congregational survey tools before deciding to develop the one used in the pilot study. "We wanted a tool that was more holistic than others we saw and included important themes such as stewardship, justice and compassion. We also wanted a survey that would be more inviting and less intimidating, because churches would not be measuring themselves against other churches."

European Christians fear EU directive will curtail religious freedom

BRUSSELS, Belgium (TCI) – Christians across Europe fear that a proposed European Union directive will undermine their free speech and freedom of religion. That's one reason the directive is being held up in negotiations between European member states. The directive seeks to outlaw discrimination on grounds including sexual orientation and religion in the provision of goods and services, and includes a harassment provision which many critics say in reality threatens free speech.

The Christian Institute, a British group which exists for "the furtherance and promotion of the Christian religion and for the advancement of education," has warned that the directive will mean 'homosexual rights' and secular values will govern how Christian organizations provide goods and services to the public.

There have also been warnings that the plans would hand power to Brussels to control sensitive and important matters of discrimination law, such as the extent of exemptions to protect religious freedom. Similar laws introduced in the U.K. in 2007 led to the closure of Roman Catholic adoption agencies.

The directive can only become law if all member states agree to it. In May a report by the Spanish Presidency of the

EU highlighted divisions between member states over the directive. The Spanish Presidency's report also said the directive must balance protection from discrimination with the right to religious liberty and free speech. And it concluded that "there is a clear need for extensive further work on the proposal."

Fortunately, the fears of Christians may not be realized. The new Belgian president of the EU has told the European Commission that there is not enough support for action. In Germany the two governing parties have said that the directive is "not fit for [its] purpose," and there are also concerns over the cost of implementing the directive's proposals. Other countries, including the Czech Republic, France and the U.K., are concerned about Brussels taking power away from their own parliaments. Business leaders warned of the impact the directive would have on already struggling businesses.

In July last year Britain's Roman Catholic leaders branded the directive an "instrument of oppression." They warned that if the directive were implemented "the EU would effectively be dictating to religious bodies what their faith does or does not require: a wholly unacceptable position."

Mozart's Requiem reveals composer's 'profound and simple faith,' says Pope



VATICAN CITY (Zenit.org) – Pope Benedict XVI recently highlighted the faith and hope in God's love expressed in the music of Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, particularly in the

composer's Requiem. (The Requiem was the last work Mozart wrote, and he died before it was completed.)

The Pope spoke after a performance of the Requiem in the courtyard of the papal residence of Castel Gandolfo. "Everything is in perfect harmony in Mozart," the Pontiff observed, "every note, every musical phrase is as it is and could not be otherwise; even those opposed are reconciled; it is called 'Mozartsche Heiterkeit' (Mozart's serenity), which envelops everything, every moment."

A gift of grace

"It is a gift of the grace of God," Benedict affirmed, "but it is also the fruit of Mozart's lively faith that, especially in sacred music, is able to reflect the luminous response of divine love, which gives hope, even when human life is lacerated by suffering and death."

"Mozart's Requiem is a lofty expression of faith," Benedict said, "which recognizes the tragic character of human existence and which does not hide its dramatic aspects." For this reason, "it is an appropriate expression of Christian faith, conscious that the whole of man's life is illuminated by the love of God."

The Pope underlined the "profound and simple faith" of the composer, "which also appears in the great prayer of the Requiem, and leads us at the same time to love intensely the ups and downs of earthly life as gifts of God and to rise above

them, contemplating death serenely as a 'key' to go through the door to happiness."

Contrary to popular opinion and the portrayal of Mozart in the play and film *Amadeus* as a supremely gifted but idiotic, scatological nincompoop, Mozart was indeed a man of faith and a devout Catholic. Nor is there historical evidence for *Amadeus*'s portrayal of him as a womanizer.

The Pontiff expressed "particular affection that has united me, I could say, always, to this great musician." He continued, "Every time I listen to his music I cannot help but return in memory to my parish church, where on feast days, when I was a boy, one of his Masses resounded." Benedict concluded, "I felt that a ray of beauty from heaven reached my heart, and I continue to experience this sensation also today every time I listen to this great, dramatic and serene meditation on death."

News

British prof calls for sterilizing the 'unfit'

Other scholars cite disturbing trend toward eugenics

ROME (Zenit.org) – A British sociologist and professor at London's Brunel University and at the University of Buckingham is arguing that "unfit" people should be sterilized, as they are not capable of bringing up children in a responsible way. Professor David Marsland voiced that opinion last month on the BBC Radio 4 series "Iconoclasts." The program is presented as a place to "think the unthinkable."



According to Marsland, the "unfit" include drug addicts, alcoholics and people with psychological problems. They should be permanently sterilized as a way to prevent child neglect and abuse, he asserted.

After his initial presentation he participated in a debate with a panel of commentators made up of social workers and other professionals who were very critical of his proposals. Nevertheless, when at the end of the 45-minute program he was asked if anything he had heard had made him change his ideas, he said he was more convinced of his position than ever. "And we're not short of people, so we don't need to use this right [to have children], even if it is a right; we've got rather too many people."

Marsland is not alone in proposing such drastic measures. In 1997 a program called Project Prevention was established by Barbara Harris in the U.S.. They give addicts \$300 if they agree to use long-term contraception or to be sterilized. According to their website they are going international and two staff members are currently visiting the United Kingdom to work on a documentary and to visit agencies.

"We're going to offer 'depo' injections every three months to women in exchange for food cards," Harris told *The Guardian*. "Depo" refers to Depo-Provera hormonal injections that are used as a method of contraception.

The handicapped are also targets

Shortly before the radio broadcast of Marsland's arguments, a British ruled against a local council in their attempt to have a woman with a low I.Q. sterilized. The plan was for the police to take the married woman (who cannot be named) from her home, and then have her sedated and sterilized against her will, *The Telegraph* reported on Aug. 18.

Justice Bodey agreed that she lacked the mental capacity to make important decisions about her medical treatment. He stated, however, that the plan to stop the 29-year-old from having children "would raise profound questions about state intervention in private and family life."

Earlier this year a tribunal in Australia took the opposite view. The Family Court gave the go-ahead to the parents of an 11-year-old profoundly disabled daughter,

Angela, to have a hysterectomy performed on her, the Australian newspaper reported March 9.

"It is only ever the disabled girls," Carolyn Frohmader pointed out. She is chief executive of Women with a Disability Australia. Her organization has lobbied for years for a ban on the sterilization of disabled children. "When you go through the cases, there is never a boy, no matter how intellectually disabled, who has to be sterilized," she pointed out.

The 'ugly' and the beautiful

While demands for sterilization might seem to be the views of a small group of extremists, critics point out that the arguments of Prof. Marsland and others are merely the logical extension of a "eugenics mentality" that is now rapidly spreading.

For example, recent figures from the Australian state of Victoria show that the number of women who terminate their pregnancies after discovering their babies have Down syndrome has almost tripled in a decade. According to a story in the July 22, 2006, *Herald Sun* newspaper, there were 146 "terminations," including five that were late term, for Down syndrome, compared with 54 in 1995. Twice as many babies with Down syndrome were aborted than were born with the condition. The previous day the newspaper had reported that two Victoria couples are suing doctors for failing to diagnose Down syndrome in their unborn babies, denying them the chance to have an abortion.

The flip side of the issue is the desire to have children that are more intelligent or beautiful. William Saletan, in a commentary published March 29 by the website Slate.com, reflected on the findings of a survey by New York University. It revealed that 10 to 13 per cent of patients seeking genetic counseling said they would screen embryos to select height, intelligence or athletic ability. "That's the number who admit they'd do it," he added.

Saletan also cited an analysis by Aaron Levine, a professor at the Georgia Institute of Technology. Levine looked at ads from college newspapers seeking donor eggs for IVF (in vitro fertilization) treatments. A significant number offered more money to women more likely to have smarter or more attractive kids, based on the donor's academic records and personal appearance.

Since then news has come out about a Denmark-based dating group called Beautiful People that is now offering a fertility service. Members of the group, who are only accepted if deemed to be sufficiently attractive, are offering their sperm and eggs for less attractive people to buy in the hope of producing better offspring.

Critics point out that once a belief in the innate dignity of the human person is lost it is just a small step from wanting a more intelligent child to forcible sterilization of the "unfit." ➤

Ryerson launches course series in urban agriculture

Elbert van Donkersgoed

TORONTO (Plumblin) – Ryerson University's G. Raymond Chang School of Continuing Education is now offering an online course series in urban agriculture as part of its Certificate in Food Security.

Students who complete the course series will receive official documentary acknowledgement from the university. The series will provide them with a comprehensive picture of current practices in urban agriculture and the environmental, socio-economic and political challenges that

must be addressed to support them.

Students will not only gain in-depth knowledge of the technical aspects of urban agriculture but also of the policy dimensions and governance issues that must be taken into account for development of effective urban agriculture systems.

The thematic focus of the course series is to demonstrate the importance and value of urban agriculture as an integral part of planning and development for sustainable, food-secure and healthy urban environments. ➤

India: University orders reinstatement of prof fired for offending Muslims

KOTTAYAM, India (CatholicCulture.org) – A university in India has ordered the reinstatement of a professor who was dismissed after allegedly insulting Muslim students – and after outraged Islamic extremists had hacked off his hand.

Mahatma Gandhi University ordered Newman College to reverse the firing of Professor T. J. Joseph, saying that the administration of Newman College "failed to follow procedures." Newman College is

an affiliate of Mahatma Gandhi University.

Joseph was attacked by knife-wielding militant Muslims on July 4, and his hand was severed. He is currently undergoing physical therapy and learning to write with his left hand. He had become a target of Muslim outrage after Islamic students accused him of insulting their faith by presenting them with a test on which one question referred to a hypothetical character named Mohammed. ➤

Catholic researcher clarifies facts surrounding life of Galileo

LIMA, Peru (CNA) – In an interview last month with the Peruvian daily El Comercio, physics expert Father Manuel Carreira clarified numerous and often misunderstood details about the life of Galileo, while also touching on the relationship between faith and science.

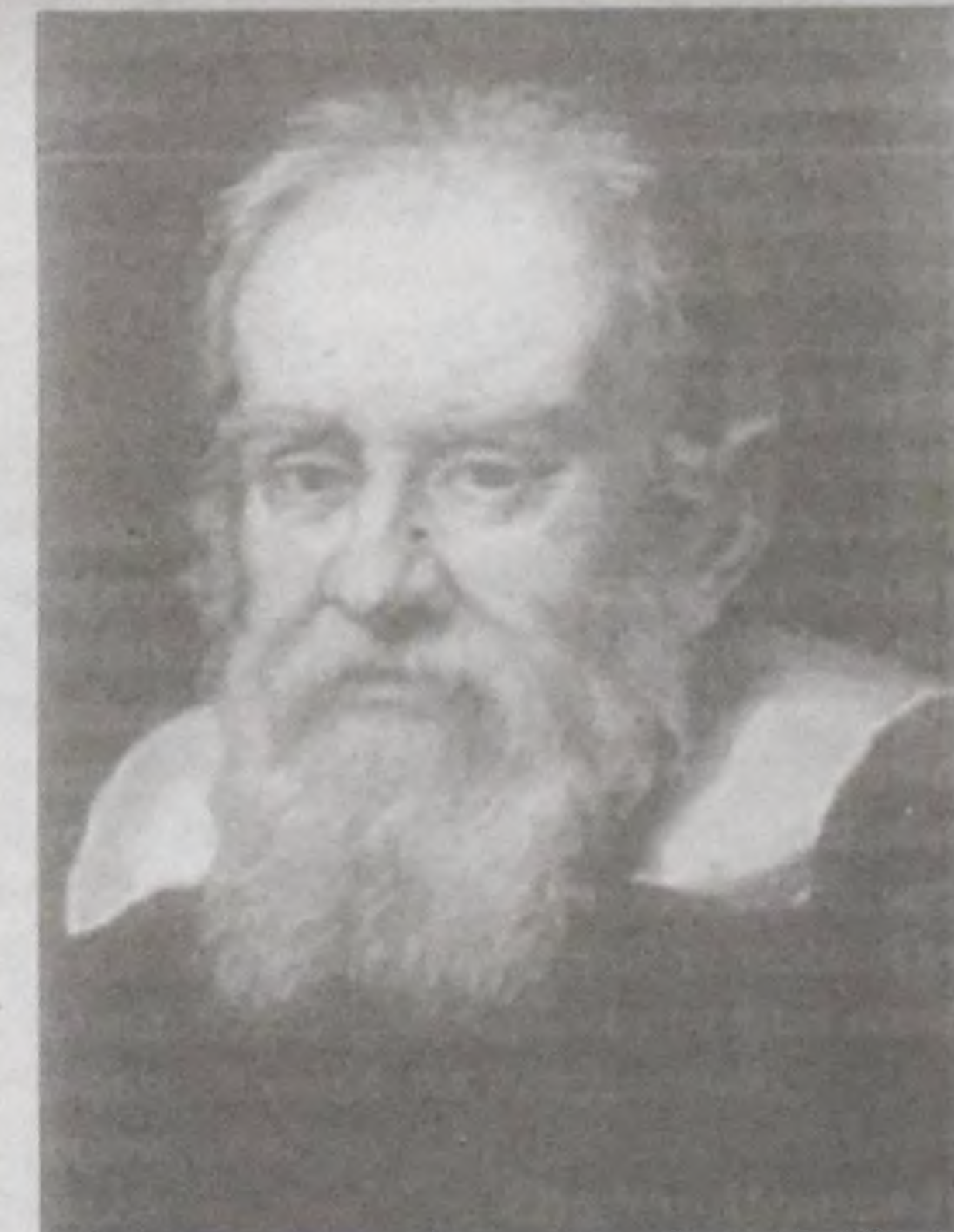
The priest confirmed to El Comercio that Galileo "was a believer" and that, despite assumptions to the contrary, "he did not spend one minute behind bars . . . nor was he excommunicated." Fr. Carreira added that Galileo "died professing the faith under the care of a religious sister and with a papal blessing."

Fr. Carreira, who was in Lima for the Second Congress on the Holy Shroud of Turin, said that during Galileo's time, there was no proof that the Earth moved around the sun. So his "evidence" was only theory at that time, and was thus dismissed by other astronomers.

Bible not a science textbook

Galileo was correct, said Carreira, in saying that "the Bible does not teach science." However, the famed astronomer "also wanted theologians to change their interpretation of the text according to his theory." Although the theologians of his day "were mistaken in thinking that the Bible teaches astronomy," the priest added, "they were correct in saying that as long as there was no evidence, Galileo should have presented his ideas as a theory and not ask them to change their opinions."

"In both cases," Fr. Carreira said, "they went outside their fields and entered that of the other. From this lesson, we have



Galileo

learned that there must be mutual respect."

Carreira then addressed the topic of creation, noting that "science is limited." He explained that while there are many theories about the creation of the world, "to speak of nothing turning into something is a concept of creation that goes beyond what science can handle: a non-material Creator is necessary." Philosophy and theology respond to this, he said, "but the details about the beginning are not told to us by the faith nor should they be taken from Genesis," he asserted, "which, is not an astronomy text." He concluded, "To deny the beginning is unscientific and to say that the universe exists [simply] 'because it does' is ridiculous and naïve." ➤

News

More than 30 years of Pinery worship

Margaret Tigchelaar

More than thirty years ago, when the Provincial Park reservation system was initiated, a group of us decided to try and get sites in the Pinery on the shores of Lake Huron for Labour Day weekend. We had teenagers, and it seemed like a good way to end the summer vacation. There were about sixteen families who partook of those weekends initially, although several had already camped at the park individually for several years.

Pretty well all of us were members of the Hamilton area Christian Reformed Churches. We soon decided that we might as well ask for permission to use the outdoor theatre for Sunday mornings, so that we could worship in the park, rather than having to disperse to attend area churches.

We were granted permission. One pastor was camping along with us, and we remember saying to him: "Since you are going anyway, why don't you do the preaching."

Our children became adults, married, wanted their own sites, and that's how our group grew. Others joined and, before we knew it, we had quite the crowd. As is the case in any group, those who played an instrument would bring it



Pinery Christian Reformed Church is not registered in the Yearbook of the CRC, but it has met for more than 30 years, as it did on September 5 this year. More than 300 worshipers attended.

along and thus we pretty well had a church service organized



Exeter praise team.

BERT WITVOET PHOTOS



Rev. Andrew Zantingh explained to the kids that God likes camping because he lived in a tent in the desert.

Rebuilt from the foundation up

This summer my wife and I began to look at different ways we could creatively renovate our older home. We went to the home show, talked to a variety of people, and looked at what other people have done on their own renovations. It got us dreaming of what we can eventually do – to make something old, refreshed and newer!

As I was talking with someone about the hopeful reno, they shared that older homes sometimes do not have the structure to take a dramatic reno and for us to take that into count when we make plans.

What struck me in that statement was how that can correlate with our own lives. For years I worried about how others saw me on the outside. Was my outside frame perfected enough so that others would accept me. I desperately hoped that the pain, struggles and insecurities that I held on the inside would not be seen. So I worked very hard at projecting a very strong, confident, funny person on the outside. I renovated constantly the picture that people would see, to fit every situation that I was in. It cost a lot; it used up a lot of energy; yet, I was not ready to address the greater issues that hung below the surface. Little did I know that the weight of the renovations on my own exterior would soon weigh me down so much that I would eventually crack under the pressure of being perfect – the good boy, the one that had to have it all together.

Final rebellion

What I needed was for it all to collapse, so that I could begin to deal with the foundational issues. I had hidden my gender brokenness and my sexual addiction behind the walls of secrecy, and, eventually, I even came out of the closet and openly embraced a lifestyle that was even more broken and more focused on the outward image presented to the world. Even though I was no longer hiding my struggle with same-gender attraction, nor my expression of being gay, I was hiding what God wanted to work on at the core of my masculine identity.

I began bending the image of gender, once again making over what I wanted those around me to see. If I could fool you into believing I was a female, I had reached success. Preoccupied by my own ability to redo

and fix the exterior, to keep me happy and those around me happy, I forgot the festering old stuff that I had packed away neatly into the storage closet of my heart. Until everything in my life began crashing around me, the storage closet no longer able to hold anymore things, I had come to the end of myself, and Jesus, in his infinite mercy toward me, asked if he could begin the renovation that I really needed.

Impossible changes

I said yes. With that simple yes, I allowed Jesus to begin to first clean out the closet. He began to address key areas in my life that first needed attention. It was the foundation. The very key to hold it all together. For me, that foundation was just how much God loved me. Period. Now, keep in mind that this is an area in my life that will continue to deepen and strengthen. Out of that foundation, Jesus began to minister his grace to me, and he began to heal the old wounds that caused me to question my gender identity in the first place. I gave him access to all the stuff, because I no longer wanted to hide, and I desperately wanted to become the man that he had always intended me to be.

One of the key issues of the renovation was the fact that my gender was not a mistake – that God created me for a specific reason as a man. That my very existence was to bear his image. He began showing me that as I walked in health and wholeness, I showed others a picture of who God is. A God of the impossible. A God who loves to make all things new. But first he always goes to the foundation, to make that strong and to repair the cracks and the crumbling places.

I am far from being the perfect model home that I desperately wanted to be and present myself to others. Today, I hope that I am more like our home, a fixer upper in need of some TLC. Knowing that Jesus will continue what he started that one day, I will stand perfected by his great skill of mercy, grace and extreme love. ➤

Kenny Warkentin (paintpent@mts.net) is an avid blogger, thinker and artist.



Words from Wild Horses

Kenny Warkentin

before we arrived. The park appreciated the fact that they only had to deal with one organizer, and they were willing to work with us. We even put together "Pinery books," about 300 of them, so that we could sing our hearts out. We used those books for about twenty five years or so, until last year.

The park management has been willing to advertize our service along with their other activities, and during the years that it was not allowed to be advertized, we did it by word of mouth. We always had a crowd. We tend to meet the same people there every year. We also realize that some who could make it one year, had been taken Home by the time the next year rolled around.

Over the years several pastors have been our guest preachers. The service has become the highlight of Labour Day weekend. But since we have it outdoors, the weather has always been a big factor. Well, would you believe it, it has rained overnight prior to the service; it has rained and poured in the afternoon after the service. But in thirty-four years it has never rained *during* the service. True, there have been a couple of times that it became cloudy and that we watched the sky more than listen to the sermon, but we have never had to cancel.

This past Labour Day was no exception. It literally stormed on Saturday, we couldn't even hear ourselves think. But when we woke up on Sunday morning, it was just breezy ... and dry. We worshiped!

For that hour on Labour Day Sunday morning the outdoor theatre is a cathedral, built by God himself. And we thank him for it. ➤

Margaret Borgdorff-Tigchelaar lives in Dundas, Ontario, and has been a member of First Hamilton CRC since 1952.



News

The CRC's justice ministry moves to Ottawa:

CC interviews Committee for Contact with the Government (CCG)

Angela Reitsma Bick (CC): This summer, CCG moved from Burlington – close to the CRC's Canadian headquarters – to Ottawa. What prompted that move?

Mike Hogeterp: CCG has been working for over eight years to establish relationships with policy makers as a way to understand the context of doing justice in Canada. From Burlington, it was a challenge to establish solid, on-going dialogue.

CC: How is CCG heard in Ottawa?

Hogeterp: First through a formal letter – to MPs, cabinet ministers, or the Prime Minister, depending on the situation. A deeper level is through writing and presenting a policy brief to a parliamentary committee. Anything [formal] is combined with informal dialogue with parliamentarians, and in some cases with civil service – this ensures that our thoughts are considered, and shapes the way we articulate ourselves.

CC: When the final product of your research gets to the government, how much has been filtered through the churches first?

Hogeterp: That's a difficult question. A lot of our work has connections to ecumenical work, so that church perspective is one side of it. The CCG is drawn from the grassroots of the churches, so they all have influenced the positions themselves. There's not any formal mechanism to engage churches in feedback loops on formal policy statements, but there is an accountability process that we work through with the current governing structures of the CRC – the Board of Trustees of Canada.

CC: That's a lot of pressure – to be accountable to every Canadian CRC.

Hogeterp: We don't purport to represent the 80,000 members of the Canadian CRC – that would be impossible, which we convey to policy makers. MPs can't represent everyone in their constituency either. By making that humble admission, it takes a bit of weight off. We're doing our best to reflect the biblical perspective on the issues we deal with. We also know that not all folks within our community would necessarily agree with what we're saying. Not every person in the church is that excited about social justice. It's a point of credibility when we say "We can't claim to carry the votes of 80,000 people, but we do bring an important perspective." That's typically received fairly well.

CC: Do you report to Synod?

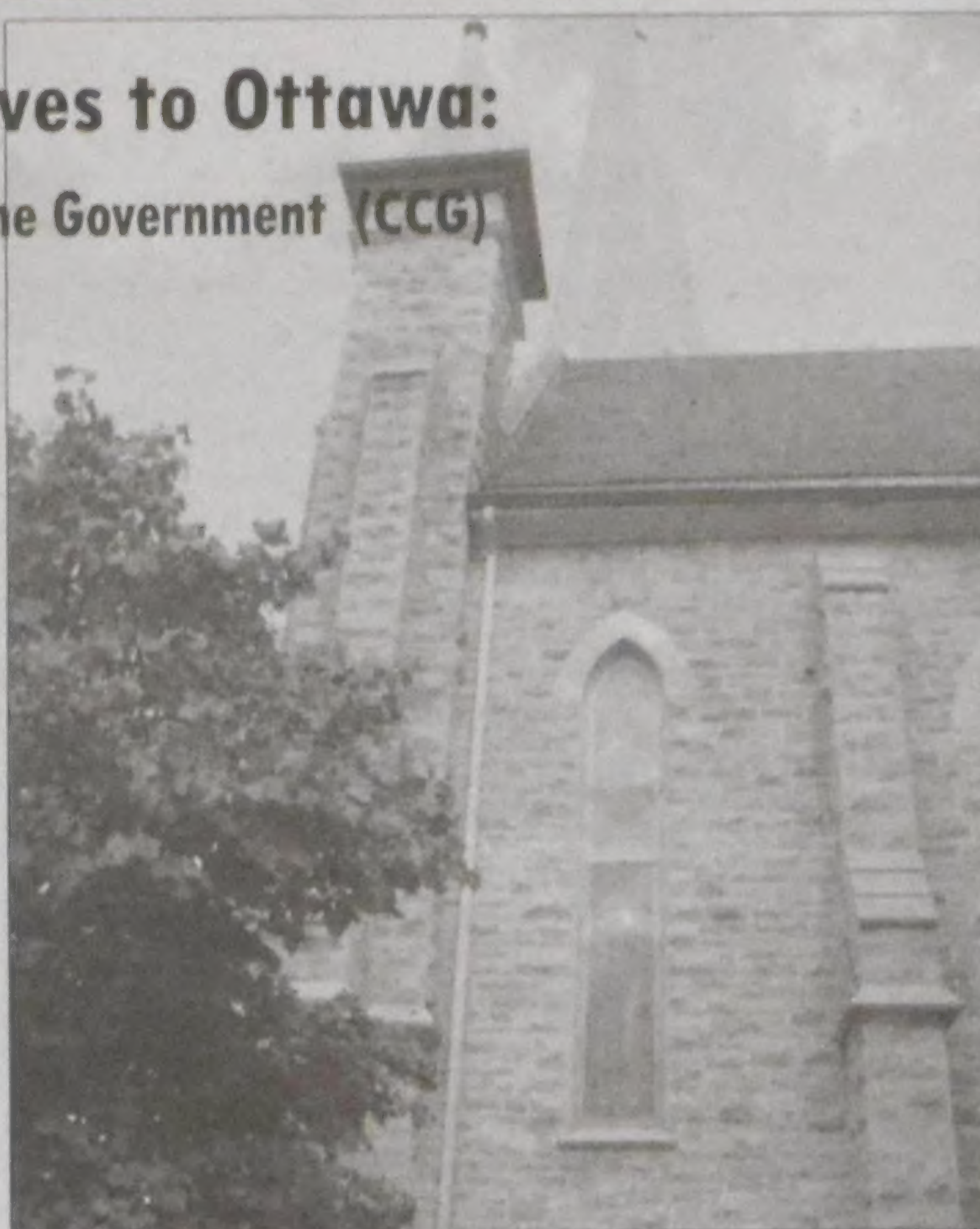
Hogeterp: Indirectly, through the Office of Canadian Ministries and the Board of Trustees.

CC: What do you say to CRC members who believe that the church should not get involved in politics?

Hogeterp: In a secularized society, where religion is considered irrelevant to public life, it's important to do our best to articulate a positive vision of what faith can contribute to the nation.

CC: Are you able to focus on both national and international issues or does one take precedence?

Hogeterp: We consciously make a choice to focus on a limited set of issues so that we can engage in a high level of research. For us right now, that's Afghanistan and indigenous justice and reconciliation, so that's a national and an international issue. The Afghanistan position comes out of Synod's reflections on peace and war in 2006. Synod itself said the church should interact with government to make peace-building a priority. Even if we have no troops there, we have a responsibility to seek peace.



MIKE HOGETERP PHOTOS

CC: Can you speak to the CRC's political role in the ecumenical landscape in Canada?

Hogeterp: The ecumenical landscape in Canada is in flux, largely because the traditional leaders in mainline churches are losing capacity for participation in ecumenical work, particularly social justice, due to shrinking budgets. That loss has led to the rising up of new leaders in the ecumenical movement – from the mid-size churches like the Salvation Army, the Mennonites and ourselves. Certainly the CRC has played an increasingly significant role in Canadian Council of Churches (CCC) and KAIROS. There has also been a breaking down of walls between the traditional ecumenical movement (CCC) and the evangelical movement (EFC). I really hope that continues.

CC: It sounds encouraging. Are there other important issues you wish our church would speak out about?

Hogeterp: It's critical that we take seriously the proceedings of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission on Indian residential schools. Among CRC there may be the assumption that we don't have the same responsibility as the mainline churches. I'd argue that the heritage of assimilation is also our heritage as Canadians. We're drinking downstream from the water of broken treaty, as Kent Nerburn put it. It's important that we recognize that, and work towards restored relationships with aboriginal people for the health of the nation.

National Day of Reconciliation



Getting Unstuck

Arlene Van Hove

Can men and women be close friends while married to others?

During the last two decades there has been a lot of debate on whether men and women can be close friends while married to others. These discussions have come out of a culture where men and women are working much more closely together than previous generations. Now men and women are colleagues or co-workers, which allows for much more connection between the sexes.

Question: I am a 48-year old married male and have three children ranging in ages from 20 to 25. The last two still live at home. Six months ago, I bumped into a former girlfriend. She was visiting the West Coast but lives on the Prairies. We exchanged email addresses. She seemed happy with her life when we met. Since we have been emailing, it has become clear she is not happy in her marriage. She has two children ages 23 and 21 and works as a nurse in the local hospital. At the beginning we began emailing one another once a week. Now we check in with each other at least four or five times a week. Consequently, my wife has become concerned, but I told her we are just friends. Still, I am finding myself looking forward to her emails, and, if I do not hear from her for two days, I begin to worry. We were a couple when we were in our late teens but had a major falling out when we were both 20, which severed our relationship. She eventually left town and married someone from the Prairies, while I met my wife at the local college and created a satisfying life for myself in our hometown. At this point in time, my former girlfriend's emails are about her coming to our town again. She has invited me to have coffee with her. I am okay with it but my wife does not agree.

Response: I am glad you are asking for advice because you are heading in the wrong direction. You are experiencing the down side of email: connecting with lost loves and rebuilding a relationship when married to others. I suggest you back off from this relationship because you left a few clues about the nature of your relationship with your former girlfriend. Your comment that you now "check in with each other at least four or five times a week" and "if I do not hear from her for two days I worry," shows you are in an emotional affair.

This may surprise you because most of us believe affairs are about sexual infidelity. Wrong. Infidelity is also about a relationship or an attachment of the heart to someone who is not your spouse. The sooner you discontinue this relationship the better. While, you may feel sad for your former girlfriend because of her unhappy relationship with her husband, she needs to be responsible for working on that relationship rather than using you as a confidant. Furthermore, should she put an end to her marriage, do you want to carry the responsibility for breaking up her home? I don't think so. I would suggest you trust your wife's intuition and not hook up with your former friend when she comes to town. You may suffer some anxiety and lack of sleep over the disconnection, but just as it was a process that led to "connecting four or five times a week," so it will be a process to move away from your attachment to her. If you find you are unable to manage this on your own I strongly urge you to seek assistance from a trusted pastor or therapist.

Arlene Van Hove (avanhove@shaw.ca) is a therapist and a member of Fleetwood CRC.



Features

The Beginning

Lord,
 May the leaves of gold and crimson
 symbolize
 not the end,
 but the beginning of a new
 and abundant life;
 May the fields of maize stubble,
 speak
 not of desolate wastelands,
 but of harvest's rich provision
 for
 an abundant life;
 May the grapes, purple and pregnant with juice,
 signify
 that from Death
 came Life –
 Vibrant, abundant,
 eternal.

*Published in STANDARD (Nazarene) November 2, 1986
 Also THE PLUS YEARS (Assemblies of God) Sept.-Nov.,
 2001 and PURPOSE (Mennonite) November 2009.



To One Who Serves

I saw the hand of God today
 in the brilliance of the dawn,
 I saw Him in the flowers, too,
 and the emerald of our lawn.

Then I saw God in another place
 so different than before,
 I saw Him in the gentle smile
 of one who serves the poor.

I saw God touch the vein-lined hand
 of one who could not walk,
 I saw Him print upon a screen
 for one who could not talk.

Then I saw the hand of God reach out
 to touch the broken, too.
 Yes, I saw the hand of God today
 in people just like you.

*Published in THE GEM (Churches of God, General Conference)
 September 5, 2004 and in LIVE (Assemblies of God) October
 29, 2006 and in Salesian Books (Catholic) TREASURES TO
 BEHOLD, January 2010

World Communion

Like new wine,
 pressed from purple passion,
 is the blood
 poured from the heart
 of God.

Smooth hands, gnarled hands,
 trembling fingers, cracked palms;
 Each grasping a tiny cup
 then together lifting up
 to receive such Grace
 in remembrance.

* Published in PURPOSE (Mennonite) October 2010



On giving thanks...

Life was cheap.
 I was embarrassed, ashamed,
 humiliated at the way
 I'd given in to greed, lust,
 cravings.
 I sat, amid squalor of my
 own making – worthless, abandoned,
 lonely.
 Then, a tender smile, gentle hands,
 a loving heart embraced me,
 despite my lack of
 respectability.
 And I looked into the face of one
 who seemed like
 God.

Today, life is precious.
 I take my place among the prosperous,
 the established,
 the renowned.
 But along the way I see the wretched state of
 another.
 I hear the cries of the broken, the crushed,
 the devastated.
 I feel the anguish, the torment,
 the degradation.
 And I extend a smile, a hand,
 a heart.
 Daring to believe that,
 through the mist of their misery, they might
 discern the face of one
 who resembles
 God.

Chris Ahlemann (cmahlemann@q.com) is a freelance writer living in
 Des Moines, IA. She has had some
 400 pieces published in periodicals
 of various Christian denominations.
 She and her husband have 2 grown
 children and 1 grandson.



**"In a little while I will once more shake
 the heavens and the earth." Haggai 2:6**

Shaking the heavens and the earth
 like a dog shaking a rat.
 It will happen again.
 Once Handel wrote music
 for a former shaking
 and another to come.
 Everything rattled
 except
 the kingdom of God,
 that everlasting kingdom
 that is now
 and shall be ever after.

Linda Siebenga (www.inscribe.org/linda-siebenga) attends Woodynook CRC,
 Lacombe, Alberta. She is a member of
 Inscribe, Christian Writers' Fellowship.



Watercolour by Melanie Pyke Psalm 90



Psalm 90 revisited

Lord, you have been our dwelling place
 throughout so many generations.
 You have been our place of grace
 in times of sorrow and desolation.

You have been our shadow when
 the sun was hot on the desert sands –
 You were an oasis for us then
 when You held us in your Father hands.

Lord, you have been a Mother bird
 when we snuggled under your wings –
 when the thunder storm overhead
 caused fear to pull at our heart-strings.

Our lives like grass are often frail –
 and when seen in your perfect light
 we must confess how much we fail
 to do the good in which you delight.

Yet, when you bless our work & play,
 life blossoms forth like a Spring meadow
 where the snow melts on a sunny day.
 Lord, bless the work of our hands, we pray.

Frank Sawyer (sawyer@t-online.hu) was
 born in BC and studied at Calvin College
 and in the Netherlands where he became
 a pastor. Since 1982 he has served with
 Christian Reformed World Missions, first
 in Latin America and then in Hungary,
 where he teaches philosophy and ethics at
 Sarospatak Seminary.



Features

In August, two thousand and ten

A little boy left us today
heavenly arms welcomed him away
leaving only questions and dismay
that loving smile, such tenderness
gracing our lives, will always be missed.

A little boy died today
an innocence of only six.
Just edging into life it seemed,
a kid's mind growing adult's dreams.
Just now ready to spread his wings,
to try his mind, a thousand things.
Why did he have to die today
and take our family's love away?

It seems not right for one so young
to leave this world with fun undone.
We know in part you'll help another
but how we'll miss you little brother.
No more "hello's" or "hi there guys,"
just a hole inside our lives.
Why did you have to die today
and steal our family's joy away?

We miss you.

Jay Hil-da lives in Barrie, Ontario.



*In memory of Jonathon Reddy, who died on
August 27, 2010 at age six*



*Melanie Pyke
watercolour
Psalm 125*

Grandfather's Secret...

His faded and tired eyes
no longer discern the details
of his all too often confusing life
and his more and more estranged offspring.

And yet he trustingly knows
of the sacred hand and wing,
that still hovers over his tired-out life
and over his rambunctious offspring.



*Lini Grol's poems, stories
and scissor-cut illustrations
are in books and magazines.
She lives in Brampton, Ontario.*



Imagine This Beautiful Place

Imagine luscious landscape,
Introducing the pearly white gates

Imagine walls adorned with every precious jewel
Created by the One who credibly rules

Imagine His voice declaring 'job well done, welcome to eternal paradise,
My daughters and sons'

Imagine the most exquisite subdivision with expansions of
Custom built mansions,

Imagine this place more beautiful than Hawaii and Cancun
Imagine flowers diffusing the fresh aroma of soft scented perfume

Imagine this place with gold streets, sunny skies and crisp cool air
A place where every saint will live like millionaires

Imagine everyone wearing sparkling crowns
While dressed in white gowns

Imagine giving praises all day long
Lifting our hands in adoration, as we sing Him songs

Imagine no sorrows, sickness and pain, only smiling faces
Reunions and Fellowship with saints of different backgrounds and races

Imagine this Place is forever

The Eternal King

What if Christ first expected arrival was in our day?
Would we perceive him, like the historic Jews, but in a similar way?
Blazing instruments, parades and celebratory scenes
As we welcome to earth Christ the king
Glitz and glam, special VIP's
Parents among celebrities or high ranked authority
But to a shocking amazement, as strange as it may seem
Christ did not come to earth as an earthly celebrity king
Bodyguards to protect him, exquisite vacations to explore
Personal chauffeurs and custom limos
The listing of his name among Forbes Billionaires
Eating lobster and caviar from expensive dinnerware
But to a shocking amazement, as strange as it may seem
Christ did not come to earth as an earthly celebrity king
Scattered paparazzi anxiously waiting to snap photo shoots
Of him sporting Dolce & Gabbana, Valentino and Gucci Suits
A mansion the size of three conjoined department stores
Six-car garage sheltering a Lamborghini, Mercedes, Porsche and a Rolls
But to a shocking amazement, as strange as it may seem
Christ did not come to earth as an earthly celebrity king
Earth was no place, where he would establish an eternal home
Yet, he returned to his royal kingdom, where he will reign forever on the throne

*Dawn W. Durand (durand.dawn@a.yahoo.com)
resides in Fresno, Texas where she is
the co-founder, writer and director of
Creative Connections Drama
Productions*



Features

blog: (n) short for weblog, a website containing an online journal with reflections, comments and links.

Christian Courier gives you a glimpse into current Reformed thinking by presenting excerpts from some of today's top blogs. Blogs are usually free-association, occasional, off-the-cuff and may not conform to the standards of print publications.

This month, we take a slightly different approach by presenting an excerpt from Redeemer University College's publication, *Tangents*, which can be read online at <http://www2.redeemer.ca/tangents-2010-june/>.



Evangelicals at Redeemer: The Great Commission meets the Cultural Mandate

Dr. Kevin Flatt

As Redeemer has grown over nearly three decades, it has reached beyond its original founding constituency of faithful supporters in Reformed churches to attract students, staff and faculty from the broader range of evangelical denominations.

Evangelicals – a general term for Protestants who believe in the authority of the Bible, pursue a close relationship with Jesus and actively seek to win the lost – are drawn to Redeemer because of the vibrant Christian faith that permeates everything we do here. But when they get here they are sometimes perplexed by the Reformed tradition's emphasis on the "Cultural Mandate," God's call to Adam and Eve and their decedents to work in the garden he gave us (Gen. 1:28).

As a faculty member from a non-Reformed evangelical background I speak from experience here. Growing up as an Evangelical, I never heard about the Cultural Mandate, but I did hear a lot about another mandate: the Great Commission, Christ's charge to his followers to make disciples of all nations and teach them to obey his commands (Matt. 28:19-20).

We Evangelicals major in the Great Commission. From sparking the Protestant missionary movement in the eighteenth century, to pioneering new avenues of cross-cultural missions (aviation, radio, Internet), to running thousands of Vacation Bible Schools and outreach ministries closer to home. Evangelicals have often excelled at spreading the gospel near and far. As an Evangelical, I thank God for this heritage.

But the single-minded focus on the Great Commission can sometimes lead to a kind of dualism, where we divide our lives into two categories: "sacred" activities (those that are somehow connected to the Great Commission) and "secular" activities (those that aren't). The "sacred" activities become the real purpose of our lives, and the "secular" activities – while not exactly wrong – become a sort of filler in between the really important things. In this way of thinking, for example, we consider serving God at work through witnessing to our coworkers or holding a prayer meeting to pray for their salvation, but we don't think about how we could serve God in our work itself.

This is where the Reformed emphasis on the Cultural Mandate can be so helpful in reminding us that all kinds of work can and should be done to God's glory: that a beautiful painting, a sound business deal and a carefully framed government policy can fulfill the Cultural Mandate and witness to God's mission of redeeming all of creation.

Many Evangelicals – myself included – have experienced an "aha!" moment when first confronted with this thoroughly biblical idea. This is not surprising given that those in the Reformed tradition and Evangelicals share a commitment to God's word and God's world. It also reflects long-term trends within the evangelical community towards greater cultural, social, political and intellectual engagement.

But can the Cultural Mandate and the Great Commission really work together? My answer to that question is a strong "yes." First, both are things we need to be serious about as Christians if we are serious about obeying God. Second, both are part of God's mission to enlighten, redeem and restore his creation. By obeying the Cultural Mandate in our jobs, volunteering, giving, family life and so on, we witness to God's redemptive work in our lives and proclaim the Kingdom that is already here and yet still coming. By obeying the Great Commission in sharing the gospel with those near and far, we participate in God's plan to redeem a great multitude of men and women from every tribe and tongue who will participate in that Kingdom.

Let's learn from each other's strengths: Evangelicals learning from Reformed passion and ingenuity in bringing every part of life under the Lordship of Christ, and Reformed



folk learning from evangelical passion and ingenuity in sharing the gospel with all people. As we work together, we can experience more of God's restoring work in our lives and our communities, and bring more glory to him than any of us could alone.

Dr. Kevin Flatt is Assistant Professor of History at Redeemer University College in Ancaster, Ontario.



A rich heritage: Redeemer's Reformed roots

Dr. Harry Van Dyke

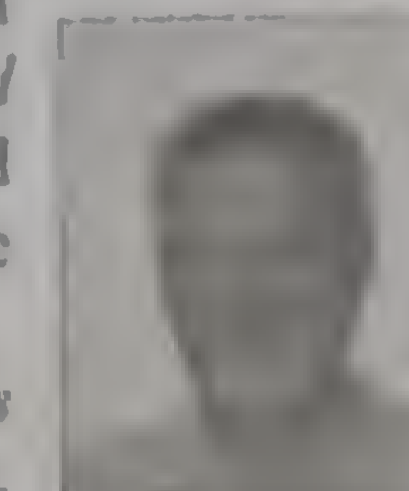
Among Christian colleges and universities in Canada, Redeemer is unique in that it works with an *integrationist* vision. It demands that teaching and scholarship be Scripturally-directed right from the get-go: in our kitchen, the salt is in the porridge before it is cooked, and not sprinkled on afterwards. We do not regard higher learning as a neutral tool with which to "do good" in the world, but as a holy calling in its own right and for its own sake.

The conviction of this vision comes from an understanding of the Cultural Mandate as found in Gen. 1:26-28. After God creates his good world, he charges his caretakers (Adam and Eve and their descendants, including us) to nurture and develop the creation and to delight in his good gifts within it. God continues to maintain the cosmos and, even after the Fall, we believe that we can still discern more of him and his nature by studying every aspect of creation. That understanding opens up the potentialities within every field of human endeavor, teaching and scholarship not excluded. This means that every aspect of higher education, every bit of curriculum, every course objective and methodology must be conceived from the start in harmony with the gospel and must be brought into obedience to captivity in Christ. For, in effect, the Great Commission is at heart a reissue of the Cultural Mandate: namely to bring the healing power of Christ's work to bear on human life as it was meant to be lived, first by front-line evangelism, but then also by every other life-practice his followers are engaged in.

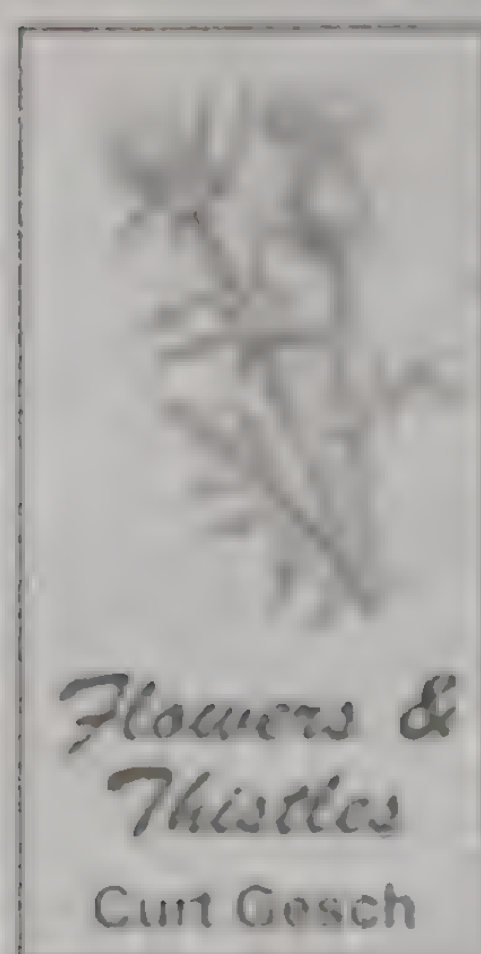
There are a number of historical factors that came together to cause these ideals to be put into practice in Canada. Of the half-million or so immigrants who came to Canada from Holland after 1945, nearly one third were active members of Reformed churches. Of these again, roughly one quarter were Neo-Calvinist in outlook, deeply influenced by the thought and action of religious leaders like Abraham Kuyper (1837-1920) and others of his generation. These were the people who stepped forward in faith and *prayed and paid* for separate Christian organizations, first in education, but soon also in the fields of agriculture, labour relations, therapeutic counseling and advocacy for public justice. These were also the people who founded Redeemer College in the late seventies.

This vision has been set forth from Redeemer's inception (I should know – I was part of the original faculty and have remained associated with Redeemer ever since) and is articulated in several documents to which all faculty and Board members are required to subscribe, namely our *Statement of Basis and Principles* and our *Educational Guidelines*. They are further expounded in a wonderful booklet, *The Cross and our Calling* (all three are available on Redeemer's website).

Dr. Harry Van Dyke is a Professor of History, Emeritus at Redeemer University College in Ancaster, Ontario.



Column



So medieval: a Labour Day's musing

"But, Curt, that sounds so MEDIEVAL!" exclaimed my teaching colleague

We were in the midst of a salary discussion, and I had quoted the Westminster Larger Catechism about duties towards "inferiors, equals, and superiors."

And Darren (not his real name) was astounded that I'd quote something that used terms like "inferiors" and "superiors" to describe relationships of authority. I suppose he would have preferred me to quote something that used words like "collaboration" and "mutuality."

If you're wondering what point I was making, it was this: the Westminster Larger Catechism describes the responsibilities of "superiors [in authority]" to include such things as protecting those who are their "inferiors." I reasoned that these old Reformers (not medieval, by the way) at Westminster were on to something biblical: Human authorities reflect Christ's kingship when they "rule and defend" us and "restrain and conquer" our enemies. School authorities, I reasoned, should see salary negotiations as a way of protecting employees, not as a budgetary item that needed trimming.

Well, Darren wasn't convinced. To him, the catechetical language was somehow or another not just archaic, but politically insensitive, unacceptable, and ... well, MEDIEVAL.

The author of *The Sword in the Stone*, T.H. White, would have been aghast to hear medieval used as a term of reprobation. In his famous novel, now seldom studied, the author pictures a way of life that, while romanticized, portrays a world of work and play, learning and doing, that inspires readers to consider the mystery of everyday life. And the author sets this story in a world that is very much "medieval", albeit seen through an early twentieth-century lens.

It's hard to decide which my favourite scenes are. Perhaps it is when Wart becomes a fish and learns from the pike. Or when he learns from Archimedes the owl. Or when his instructor is the oak tree. King Pellinore proudly displaying his collection of fewmets has been a source of inspiration to some of our family members. "Want to see my fewmets?" Moose droppings that look like chocolate-covered almonds are our contextualized application.

Lately I've been thinking of the scenes of harvest. Red-faced, red-nosed, ineffectual, blustering Sir Ector directed the hay harvest which would probably proceed even more efficiently without his help. He stood on the top of a hay rick, and shouted commands all over the two-hundred-acre field, and grew purple in the face." Meanwhile, unheeding, the peasant mowers worked as a team, their scythes "roaring." The women raked the hay, the boys straightened it up, and then other adults picked up the hay and put it on the horse-drawn wagons.

Quite a primitive way of harvesting the crop. It is so medieval. Is it medieval? - working as a community



Betsey, Cow, and Patty. (The last two are fewmet-makers.)

man, woman, child; lord, knight-in-training, peasant; wheelwright, wagon-maker, tool-wielder, and horse. Or is it communal?

Those who used to "put up hay" or thresh oats with a whole team of area farmers and out-of-shape town kids know something of what this medieval harvest was like. Those who have just a small window of opportunity to bale up and store forage - either in silo or large bales know a little less, but still feel the mutual dependence and community of purpose described in *The Sword in the Stone*. But they are so far removed from each other: they communicate from cab to cab, from machine to machine, by cell phones.

Closer to the medieval feel is the work bee, I think. When the members of the Prince George Christian Reformed Church get together and clean the building from top to bottom with rags, mops, Swiffers, and cloths, they experience something of the value of communal labour. So, too, when ex-president Jimmy Carter began rebuilding houses with Habitat for Humanity. So, too, when the retired men of Lynden, Washington, churches had a lawn-mowing day, at which they all assembled with riding mowers and did the entire grounds in a trice, and then drank coffee and ate donuts.

How different from the rush-around world of high-production, technology-intensive factory work, watching robots work from the protection of your sound-proof booth. How different from the demands of a clock-watching production schedule. How different from the office madness of commuting for hours to work and home, putting in extra unpaid time just to keep your job. How different from teaching school in which devotion to mandated "curricular and learning outcomes" hampers each teacher's creativity and makes communal planning a matter of saying "yea" to a remote authority.

T.H. White tells us how he views (romantically, to be sure) the medieval manor life:

"Everybody was happy. The villeins [peasants, serfs] were slaves if you chose to look at it in one way, but, if you chose to look at it in another, they were just the same farm labourers as starve on thirty shillings a week

to-day [1938]. It has never been an economic proposition for an owner of cattle to starve his cows, so why should an owner of slaves starve them? The truth is that nowadays the farm labourer is ready to accept so little money because he does not have to throw his soul in with the bargain, as he would have to do in a town, and just the same freedom of spirit has obtained in the country since Sir Ector.... They knew that Sir Ector loved and was proud of them.... He walked and worked among them, thought of their welfare, and could tell the good workmen from the bad. He was the eternal farmer, in fact, one of those people who seem to be employing labour at thirty shillings a week, but is actually paying half as much again in voluntary overtime, providing a cottage free or at nominal rent, and possibly making an extra present of his milk and eggs and home-brewed beer."

I know a family who experienced just such a "superior" as Sir Ector. Not the blustery, red-nosed buffoon part of Sir Ector, but the care-of-workers part. He provided the home, the milk, the meat, and the living quarters for his farm-worker right through retirement, at nominal fee, sometimes *gratis*.

How rare and fine it might be if more of us worked mediocrally, related mediocrally, and played mediocrally.

I could also point to the abuses of medieval society and apply Round-Up to White's rose-coloured picture but it's getting late on Labour Day, and I want to go collect some fewmets from Cow and Patty.

Curt Gesch and his wife, Betsey, live very technologically-advanced lives in Quick, B.C. They are thinking of getting high-speed Internet to complement their wooden hay-rake. They have cars, too.



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"I know what fewmets are," said the Wart with interest. "They are the droppings of the beast pursued. The labourer keeps them in his horn to shew to his master, and can tell by them whether it is a warrantable beast or otherwise, and what state it is in."

"Intelligent child," remarked King Pellinore. "Very. Now Ay carry fewmets about with me practically all the time."

(from *The Sword in the Stone*, by T.H. White)

Columns

From the 11th Province

Marian Van Til

There are many subjects under the sun that a child cannot truly grasp. That is especially true of death and dying, about which I periodically used to overhear my parents talk.

Though I knew that Christians in our church who had died were with Jesus (including the father of the twins in my Christian-school class), that knowledge only partially mitigated the fear that grabbed me when thinking about death. I envisioned dying as a horrible, groping-blind leap that I would one day have to make over the awful chasm between this earth and the next.

My father would occasionally read to us at the dinner table about the lives of missionaries in China and elsewhere, some of whom suffered horrifically and were murdered. The possibility that I might someday be subjected to such things scared me so much that I used to pray that I wouldn't have to die; that Jesus would return first and save me from that dreaded fate. I had no fear that I would end up in hell; it was the painful, ominous getting from here to heaven that put knots in my stomach. My other childhood death-related fear was that I would lose one of my parents. (When they did die, within four years of each other, when I was 16 and 20, God gave me ample grace to cope.)

How having an adult perspective as a child of God changes things! As St. Paul

says, "When I was a child I thought as a child and spoke as a child, but now I have put away childish things...." One of those "childish things" was my attitude towards death. I thought of all this recently when my new employer and I (I'm working in a self-storage office two days a week) got into a discussion about the sad state of the world. He's a retired FBI agent whose nearly 30-year-long contact with the seamy, sin-sick side of human nature has exposed him to death and made him impatient with those who waste their lives on drugs and crime – and terrorism. In the course of our discussion I said, "I'm glad I'm as old as I am so that I won't be alive 40 years from now to see the increasingly devastating results of 'everyone doing what is right in their own eyes.'"

Trust him with all your heart

It's clear from Scripture, especially Revelation and its antecedent in the book of Daniel, that there will be a time of intense persecution of believers before Christ returns. Daniel 7:25 tells us that the Most High will be spoken against and his saints will be oppressed and warred upon for a specific period of time by "the fourth beast." That beast is described as a kingdom and leader of immense power that devours three previous kingdoms and will "try to change

the set times and the laws." And God will allow it to happen! In fact, "the saints will be handed over to him for a time, times and half a time." He will even have the wholehearted allegiance of everybody whose name is not written in the Book of Life: they will worship the beast (Dan. 7:8). That's terrifying if we lose perspective of God's control.

More Christian martyrs died in the 20th century and first decade of the 21st than in all the previous combined centuries since Christ was on earth; but that toll will rise. Some of us may be required to be among that number, a number that must be "completed" in order for the world to be ready for Christ's return (See Rev. 6:9-11).

That God should define a specific number of his saints who must die martyrs' deaths before he allows Christ to return seems bizarre at first glance, not a little disquieting, and possibly even downright masochistic on God's part. But we should not let secular attitudes infuse our thinking. Death (even a 'gruesome, torturous one') isn't the worst thing that can happen to us. It is the "second death" that properly incites terror. To be sure, however, the situation "calls for patient endurance and faithfulness on the part of the saints," as Revelation says.

The LORD assures us that the death of his saints is precious in his sight (Ps. 116:5). We know, too, that he will preserve his faithful

Precious to the LORD is the death of his saints



The stoning of Stephen watercolour by Melanie Pyke (www.melpyke.com)

and pay back in full "the proud," those who defy him (Ps. 31:23). Perhaps we need reminding that he will then "hand over the sovereignty, power and greatness of the kingdoms under the whole heaven" to the saints – us! (Dan. 7:27). And his Kingdom will be an everlasting kingdom. Thanks be to God.

Marian Van Til (mvan-til@roadrunner.com) is a former CC editor living in Youngstown, NY.



Patchwork Words

Melissa Kuipers

"The husband I want is going to play guitar," I declared to my room mate in first-year university. She looked at me incredulously. "What? You can't expect that!" I was a little caught off guard by her response. I mean, I wasn't entirely serious about the statement, but not altogether joking either. The statement I had made was the sort of thing we had said in my youth group in high school, in Bible college, and now, I thought, we would have the same approach at my Christian university.

Now she is married to a wonderful guitar player, but she didn't set out to find him with the same shopping-list type expectations that she had talked me out of.

I started my list in high school. In youth group, we at one time discussed this very topic – setting our standards high and waiting for "the One" God has chosen for each of us. We sat down with pieces of loose leaf and pencils, listing our detailed priorities of what we were looking for in the opposite sex. "God will give us the desires of our hearts," we quoted from the Psalms, believing that whichever particular desires we could invent would be the ones God would be faithful to answer if we just waited long enough. I tucked the list in the front of my zip-up Bible case, a good point of reference for such an important checklist.

Build a spouse

Now, I'm all for creating expectations in terms of character traits, values and important life style choices. However, our lists went into the nitty-gritty of appearance, talents, gifts and favourites. Looking back, it sort of reminds me of the Build-A-Bear stores we see in the mall – go in, design all the features you would like on your product, wait till it's made, and come out happy.

Reach for the top

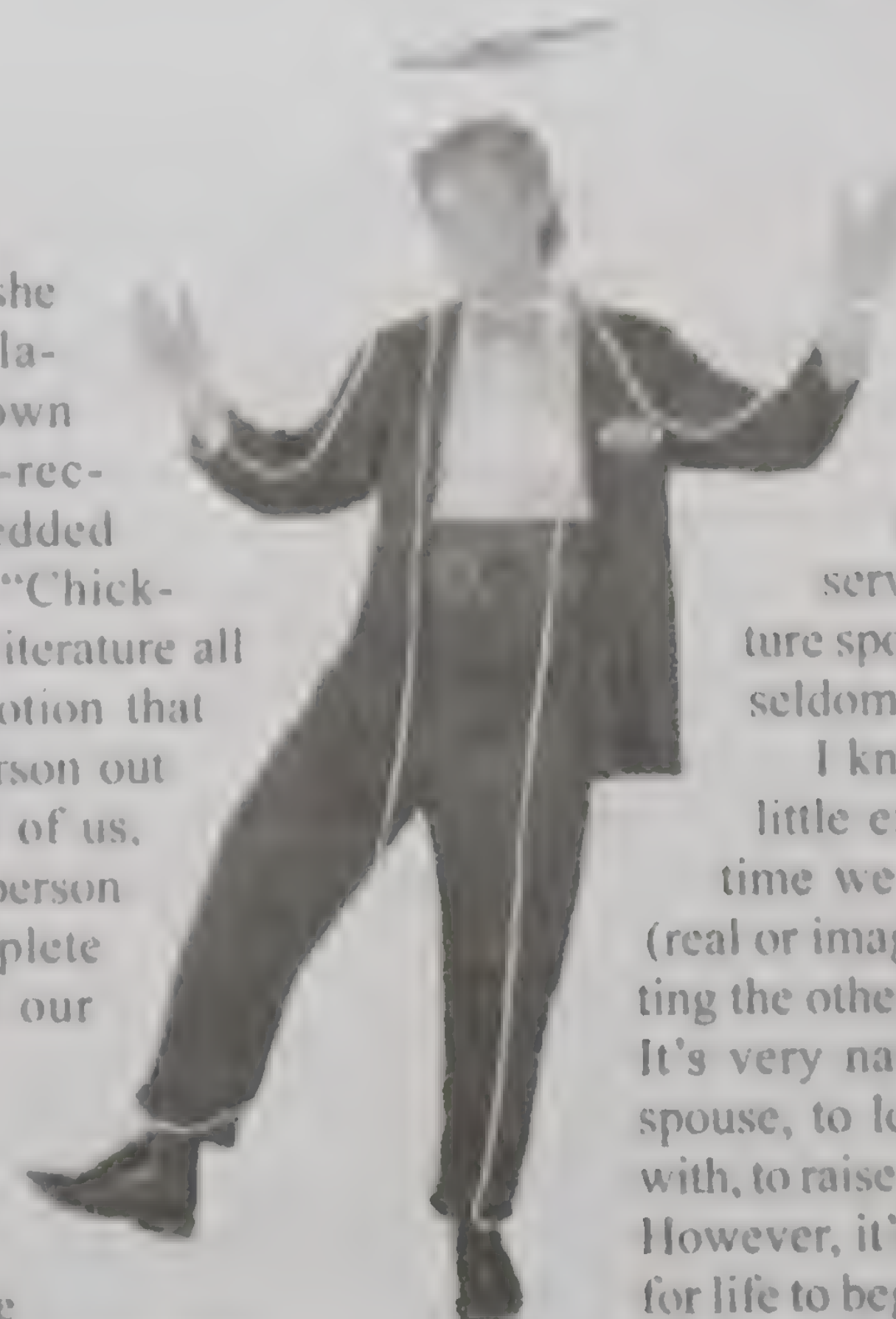
I found myself reading similar list-writing encouragement in the Christian bookstore a few years ago. I was searching for relationship advice myself and picked up one particularly pink and purple book, and read about how girls and young women need to set their standards high, not settle for anything less than "God's best for you." The book had worksheets throughout it, one of which encouraged girls to write down what they were looking for in a guy, listing specific categories: physical appearance, personality, spirituality, talents, hobbies. "We are daughters of the King," the book encouraged, "and no expectation is too high."

Years later, it struck me when I was having a conversation with my cousin, who is not a Christian, that the concept of "waiting for the One," is not unique to Christian subculture. "Oh, we're fed this myth

everywhere," she complained, lamenting her own only-recently-recognized embedded expectations. "Chick-flicks, music, literature all feed us this notion that there's one person out there for each of us, and only one person who can complete us and fulfill our destiny."

A perfect match?

It got me thinking, has Christian subculture simply bought right into this notion and claimed it as its own simply by replacing a notion of fate with predestination? Are we just as guilty of putting our hopes and dreams into one other person, our "other half," our completion? Is a Christian subculture encouraging us to look for specific traits that will match our own desires, callings, interests, attractions – perfectly? In circles, such as my own, young people are encouraged to craft a mental image of a future spouse, someone whom we may



shape in our own image. Thus, our hopes and dreams of being completely fulfilled and satisfied once we arrive at the destination of marriage serve to create an idol in our future spouses. And this kind of idolatry seldom gets checked.

I know my experience might be a little extreme, but I believe that any time we expect another human being (real or imaginary) to fulfill us, we are setting the other, and ourselves, up for failure. It's very natural and healthy to desire a spouse, to long for someone to spend life with, to raise a family with, to grow old with. However, it's dangerous for singles to wait for life to begin with marriage. So easily we can invest our energy in waiting for all our dreams and hopes to be fulfilled in marriage and, in the mean time, miss out on opportunities to live fully the life God has called us to.

Melissa Kuipers (mckuip@gmail.com) is a full-time student completing her Masters of Arts in Creative Writing at the University of Toronto.



Columns

Co-owning the Earth

Bert Hielema

Could this be true? Could the use of carbon fuel, extracted from deep into the earth, whether coal or crude, be compared to the apple in Eden, that fateful fruit that set us off on the wrong track? The word "track" reminds me of 1939 when, in grade 5 of the J.C. Wirtz School in Groningen, the teacher told us that some religious fanatics saw the inauguration of the first train between Amsterdam and Haarlem in 1839 as the work of the devil. The class found this notion absurd, of course. Now I am not so sure.

I was thinking about this while weeding my extensive vegetable garden on a humid day, right after torrential rains. Hoeing is hard work and renders me subject to sun-stroke and bug-bites. It is eerily reminiscent of Genesis 3, which mentions toil, thorns, thistles and painful sweat, a far cry from farmers in air-conditioned, stereo-equipped tractors, fully fed on fossil fuel, mingling so-called Monsanto super seeds with Round-Up, generating super weeds in the process.

Oh, that oil thing again. Yet, since 1981, the quantity of oil extracted from the earth has exceeded new oil discoveries by an ever-widening margin. In 2008, the world pumped 31 billion barrels of oil, but discovered fewer than 9 billion new barrels. World reserves of conventional oil are in a free fall, decreasing every year.

It can't be denied: food is oil and oil is food. Tractors use gasoline or diesel fuel. Irrigation pumps use diesel, natural gas or coal-fired electricity. Fertilizer production also is energy-intensive. Natural gas is used to synthesize the basic ammonia building block in nitrogen fertilizers. The mining, manufacture and international transport of phosphate and potash fertilizers all depend on oil. The glib answer to the question of how we can end world hunger has always been to focus on more technology. Unfortunately this requires even more fuel and more Climate Change.

I am afraid that the Christian answer to less oil-consumption is whipping our bodies into shape and using muscle power, and so becoming re-acquainted with working without the "convenient" carbon-powered tools, a definite no-no in the Kingdom to come.

Hard, healthy work

When I started my garden 35 years ago, the soil was almost pure sand covered by a teeny-weeny bit of topsoil, enough to sprout stubborn weeds. So, in my wheelbarrow, I hauled untold many loads of decade-old manure from a neighboring farm: pure black soil, one hundred percent unadulterated goodness, almost worth its weight in gold. This I worked into the sand, so that now, after more than three decades, aided by continuous increments of compost, my original sandy patch is a

The work of the devil?

dark, loamy, fertile plot on which I grow potatoes, beans, raspberries, kale, of course, lettuce galore, tomatoes, beets, carrots – everything. Every spring, black flies notwithstanding, I double dig my garden, and form raised beds. All hard, healthy work, and very satisfying: also a real nest-egg when troubling times arrive. And they are on the horizon.

I am a news-freak: I subscribe to umpteenth magazines, and view numerous news sources every day. Believe me, things out there are getting more frightening by the day. I know that our press hates to publish bad news: it's bad for business. After reading Barbara Ehrenreich's *Smile or Die: How Positive Thinking Fooled America and the World*, I know that I am right when I voice the odd negative comment: I am merely acting as a human being, calling a spade a spade. It reminds me of Jesus, who, in Luke 12, states that he came to bring division, even within the most intimate relationships. There he also tells us to be culturally aware, and interpret what goes on in the world lest we be fooled by false appearances.

Tree health

But back to my 50-acre plot, the little piece of earth that I may call my own, and for which I will have to give account on the Day of Judgment. It's typical Eastern Ontario terrain: bush, swamp, rock, and some arable land, and, since I am not a farmer, I have planted most of the open spaces with trees, both silver maple and pine, thousands of those, made possible in the good times, when I could purchase them for a penny a piece and got 10 pennies for planting them.

Our oldest son gave me a book by Diana Beresfors-Kroeger *The Global Forest*. In it this botanist-medical-biochemist poet tells us that "A healthy tree with a wide canopy around the house will significantly reduce particulate pollution.... They form a living wall for health and a basic barrier to the pillage of pollution."

Get ready for Christ's return: plant a tree, produce a veggie garden, shop at farmers' markets, drive less, walk or bike more, always keep the Kingdom in mind.



Bert Hielema lives in Tweed, Ont., 5.6 km from the village, where the recently repaved highway has room for a bike, a real blessing.

His blog is "hielem.ca."

EVERYDAY CHRISTIAN

Cathy Smith

My name is Cathy Smith. Kind of an ordinary name, isn't it? No one has trouble spelling it, at any rate. I'm a Christian, a wife, a mom, grandma, retired teacher, daughter, sister, aunt, Canadian, gardener, friend, reader, church member, bulletin editor, catechism teacher, history buff, choir member, art lover, neighbour and homemaker. And now a writer, too! But Christian was first on the list for a reason. It's an indelible part of who I am, like my name. I'm delighted to be here, the newest CC team member, writing for a publication that also puts Christian first. My column will highlight the efforts of an everyday Christian like me to live, sometimes faithfully, sometimes stumblingly, as a Christian every day of my life.

Even ordinary Christians can be called to walk extraordinary paths. I've been married for thirty-two years to someone who does not share my faith. I have three children. One is a Christian. Two call themselves atheists. I love my local church dearly and have been a member for thirty-two years, but I favour women in church office, and my congregation does not ordain women. I've taught hundreds of kids in two Christian schools, both elementary and secondary. I carry them all with me, invisible tattoos, my life inked with their names and faces. They are my very own personal cloud of witnesses. I live in a small town, where, like the bar in *Cheers*, "everybody knows your name." The crucible of my Christian faith is my marriage, my family, my church, my students, my community. Jesus calls me to practise my discipleship close to home.

I remember having a cool family Bible as a kid. It had four different versions of Scripture lined up side by side on one page. I loved that Bible. Especially the translation that offered up Paul's rebuke to the Galatians this way: "You stupid Galatians!" (Gal. 3:1). That was deliciously scandalous to my childish ears. We weren't allowed to call one another "stupid"! When I had friends over, I always chose that passage to read aloud.

I'm hoping that my reflections on living as an everyday Christian might serve a similar function. Something to line up beside your experiences. A gauge. A mark on the wall. Or perhaps, a mirror, where you'll see yourself – your pilgrimage as ordinary and extraordinary as mine. Let's compare notes. Here's my first:

Holy ordinary

Another Sunday morning church service. At 55, having attended church twice a Sunday for most of my life, I've probably sat through more than 5000 services in my day. You might think it just gets ordinary and repetitive after a while. Not so.

These are the things I saw at church yesterday.

I saw a doting dad smile in absolute adora-

Comparing notes



tion at his bald young son. I saw fresh purple coneflowers and white Shasta daisies grace the sanctuary in glass vases that sparkled with the sunlight streaming in from the window. I saw a restless four-year-old rest his head trustingly on the shoulder of his fourteen-year-old babysitter. I saw an usher joke with an old friend as the latter headed into church. I saw a friendly adult ask a teen how things were going. I saw a middle-aged woman ask the same of an elderly man. I saw an organist and pianist play duets that offered up their best accompaniment to the congregation and the Lord.

I saw a house of God full to the brim with expectant faces, eager for the good news of God's faithfulness to all generations. I saw a young pastor give his utmost to do justice to the Word of God and the sacrament of baptism to two new members. He preached with convicted preparedness, and spoke to the parents with warmth and hope. I saw a young wife and mother slip her hand into her husband's as they stood together to speak their thankful vow. I saw the children of our church family skip to the front to witness the baptisms up close, the pastor handling the milling chaos with good humour and ease. I saw a senior citizen lean forward, smiling, totally engaged in the moment.

I saw the faithful dig into their wallets and give to the work of the church. I saw a powerpoint slide show that highlighted the fun and energy of the VBS program held the week before. Dozens of teachers and helpers, grinning into the camera. A hundred children or more sporting colourful t-shirts, working on crafts, and singing songs.

I saw a grandma lift her hands in quiet praise during the doxology.

I saw God work. It's fearsomely beautiful to behold.

Cathy Smith lives in Wyoming, Ontario, with her husband Mark. This is her first column for CC, but not her first article. We welcome her and look forward to publishing her regular but not necessarily "ordinary" contributions. She has agreed to be a contributing editor. She can be reached at "cathysmith001@hotmail.com."



Column

ODDS AND TRENDS

Life in Haiti, 8 months later

In early September, Joella De Boer travelled to rural Haiti with a Canadian charity called International Child Care (ICC). De Boer, a member of Discovery CRC in Bowmanville, Ontario, shares two experiences from her trip.



"We spent two days up north in Cape Haitian. The clinics were simple with very few supplies, only one or two patient beds, but the people we met all expressed their thankfulness for what they had. The clinics serve over 12,000 people in the area. A few months ago, ICC donated a motorcycle to one of the clinics. In an emergency, the people can now drive 30 minutes to get into cell phone range to call the ambulance, which would still take two hours to arrive. The old method was for someone to walk **four** hours into cell phone range. When we got to the clinic, however, we realized that they hadn't used the motorcycle yet because they couldn't afford gas. Next up for ICC – fundraising gas money for the motorcycle.

"Our last day in Port au Prince was spent with celebrities: Georges Laraque (Canadian hockey player with Haitian roots) and his good friend Pamela Anderson! Georges has helped to raise \$1.5 million towards rebuilding Grace Children's Hospital. Pamela asked one of the ICC workers what was preventing its completion. The answer, of course, was cash flow. Pamela replied, 'Let's see what we can do about that.'"

Those supporting the hospital are trying to finish it before hurricane season. "We, as lucky Canadians," Georges says on his website, "can make a difference and help rebuild this beautiful nation whose courageous people, despite everything, would rather stay in their country and live with hope of a better future."

The 10.10.10 Prayer

We pray for those who live in poverty, we cry out for those who are denied justice and we weep for all who are suffering.

On Sunday, October 10, one hundred million Christians around the world will speak the words of that prayer together – each in his own language. This year's Micah Challenge campaign culminates with a global day of prayer, which organizers hope will help in halving poverty by 2015, fulfilling the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Micah Challenge also wants ten million Christians to hold governments accountable regarding the MDGs. Each country is handling advocacy in its own way.

The Christian Reformed Church of North America is asking for a "show of hands" from its members.

"Who thinks we can achieve the MDGs by 2015?" the CRCNA asks. "Let's see a show of hands!" The image of a hand has five fingers to symbolize the five years remaining in the MDGs' timeline, and a raised hand indicates a desire to be counted. The CRC's Office of Social Justice and its Committee for Contact with the Government are encouraging local congregations and schools to collect, on October 10, the handprints of Christians who support the Micah Challenge. These handprints will be given to Prime Minister Harper in a "Big Handover," demonstrating our efforts to pray, learn about and take action regarding the MDGs. See www.handsformdgs.org for more information.



Angela Reitsma Bick



Diaconal Ministries
invites you to attend
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October 16, 2010

Come to celebrate God through worship and enjoy training in ministry and learning from others at Hamilton District Christian High, **Ancaster**. The theme for the day is "Fan the Flame." Many different workshops are being prepared for you! Contact your deacons for more information or to register, visit website diaconalministries.com

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Liberty or LIABILITY?

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OCTOBER 27, 2010

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This is a free event open to all. For more information, please visit www.redeemer.ca/liberty or go.cardus.ca/liberty, or contact Marlene Raddatz at 905.648.2139 x 4414

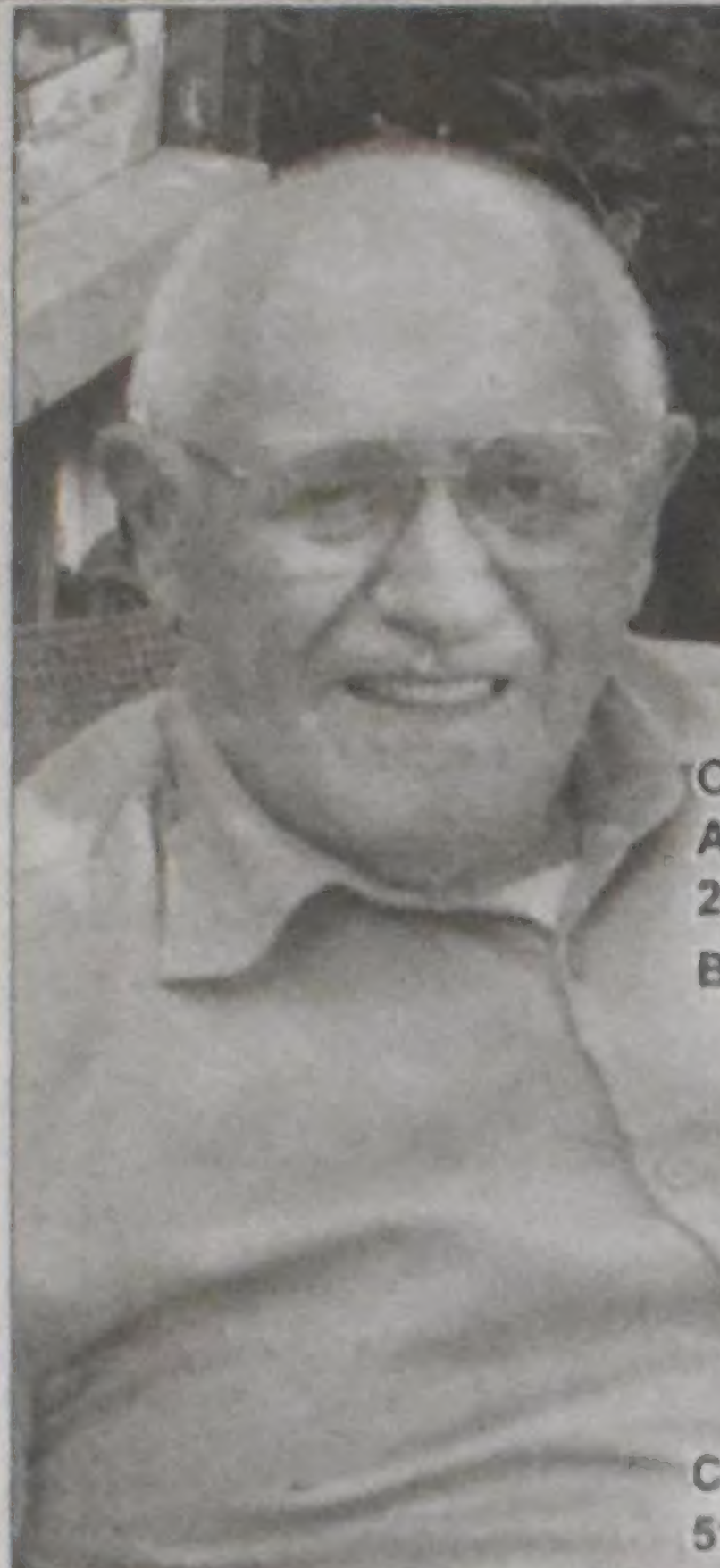
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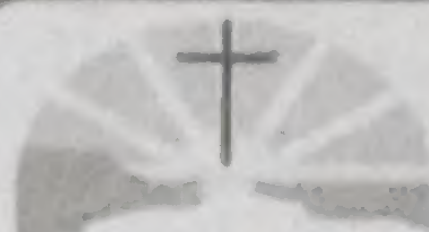
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Classifieds

Birthday		Obituaries
 <p>GEORGE (GEERT) DYKHUIS 90 YEARS BLESSED! October 6, 2010</p> <p>We invite you to join us as we celebrate 90 years of God's faithfulness and goodness to our husband, father, stepfather and grandfather.</p> <p>Open House - Saturday, October 16, 2-4 p.m. Atrium - London District Christian Secondary School 24 Braesyde Ave, London ON N5W 1V3 Best wishes only.</p> <p>Marion Dykhuis Peter Dykhuis & Jayne Wark, Bedford, NS Claire, Lucy Margaret Dijkhuis & Pieter Pereboom, Denfield, ON Jonathan Maureen & Jim Jewell, Leamington, ON John & Erin, Paul & Courtney, Calgary, Ab</p> <p>Correspondence: 1804 Park Ave, London ON N5W 2J5 519-455-6246</p>		<p>Ultgeest, Netherlands Burlington, Ontario May 20, 1930 September 2, 2010</p> <p>At the appointed time, God called home his child</p> <p>STEVE (Sybren) STELPSTRA in his 81st year.</p> <p>Loving husband & friend to his wife Wilma (nee Osinga) for 54 years.</p> <p>Beloved father to Cindy & (Henry), Edie & (Paul), Don & (Kim), Glenn & (Evelyn).</p> <p>Cherished grandfather to Josh, Tim, Lauren, Adam, Evan, Rachel & Nathaniel.</p> <p>Predeceased by his brother Bouke, survived by siblings, Feikje, Doug, Bill & Theo.</p> <p>Psalm 139:16b <i>All the days ordained for me were written in your book before one of them came to be.</i></p> <p>Correspondence: 1108 Gallagher Rd Burlington ON L7T 2M9</p>
		<p><i>"The Lord giveth, the Lord taketh; his name be praised."</i> Peacefully at the Maples Nursing Home Tavistock, on Monday September 6, 2010,</p> <p>HENDRIK ZOMER passed away in his 91st year.</p> <p>Beloved husband of Wilhelmina "Willy" Zomer (nee VanLeeuwen). Dear father of Henry (Grace) Zomer of Ingersoll, Wilma Zomer of Gaspe QC, JoAnn Zomer of Dundas, Arlene Zomer of Waterloo, and Janet (Dale) Beer of Waterloo.</p> <p>Loved grandfather of seven grandchildren and two great-grandchildren. Dear brother of Tryntje Hooyer, and brother-in-law of Tini Zomer, Nell VandenBerg, Tryntje Zomer, Jantje Zomer and Carla Kool. Also survived by several nieces, nephews, as well as by numerous in-laws and extended Zomer and VanLeeuwen families in Canada, the Netherlands and Brazil.</p> <p>Predeceased by his parents Hendrik and Anna (nee Bos) Zomer, four brothers; Tjakko, Koen, Rieks, Derk, and two sisters; Geertje, and Machteld.</p> <p>Hendrik attended the Covenant Christian Reformed Church in Woodstock. The memorial service will be held on Thursday September 9, 2010 at the church. Interment in the Oxford Memorial Park Cemetery. In lieu of flowers, contributions to the Canadian Diabetes Association or the Christian Reformed World Relief Committee would be appreciated and may be arranged through the Longworth Funeral Home Woodstock, 519-539-0004.</p> <p>Online condolences at www.longworthfuneralhome.com</p>

 <p>Georgian Bay/ Honey Harbour, located 90 min. north of Toronto</p> <p>A Family Vacation</p> <p>At Hall's Cottages We Offer:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Newly renovated, clean two & three bedroom cottages All units are air conditioned Safe sandy beach with instant access to Georgian Bay A park that is great for families and a children's play area close by Lund Fishing Boat rentals Free use of canoes and paddleboats Satellite TV Propane BBQ at each cottage Discounts available for off season Check out our specials on the web <p>(705) 756-2462 1-877-425-5726</p> <p>www.hallscottages.com email: info@hallscottages.com</p>	<p>Personal</p> <p>Retired Ontario farmer, mid 70's, would like to meet Christian lady, 72-77. Please reply to: File #2772 Christian Courier 2 Aiken St. St. Catharines ON L2N 1V8</p> <p>Christian lady seeks correspondence with christian male between the ages of 60 to 70 years. Preferably in the GTA or Niag. peninsula. Reply to: File #2773 Christian Courier 2 Aiken St. St. Catharines ON L2N 1V8</p>	<p>Apartments for Rent</p> <p>Spacious 1 bedroom furnished apartment w/garage. Located in a quiet village on Hwy 22 about 10 minutes west of London, Ont. \$400 plus utilities. No Sunday calls please. Contact: 519-666-1419</p> <p>Newly renovated and freshly painted basement apartment. Very spacious and bright, full size windows, separate entrance, large kitchen. Quick and convenient access to the QEW. Located on Red Maple Ave. in Jordan Station. Includes laundry and utilities. Asking \$900. Please call 905-562-5732.</p>
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Information about CCS is presented at www.communitychristianschool.ca. An information package is available upon request. Interested applicants can send their résumé, statement of faith, and philosophy of Christian education.

Contact: **Nancy Schoenmaker**
6877 Southvillage Drive, Greely, ON K4P 0A4
nancyplus4@hotmail.com / 1-613-821-5443

To receive full consideration applications must be received by October 31, 2010.

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Events/Advertising

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

- Oct 9, 10 Ladner CRC**, in British Columbia, 60th anniversary. Tel. #604-946-7033 Email: ladnercrc@telus.net See ad p. 17.
- Oct 16** Diaconal Ministries invites you to attend a Day of Encouragement: come to celebrate God through worship and enjoy training in ministry and learning from others at Hamilton District Christian High, **Ancaster**. The theme for the day is "Fan the Flame." Many different workshops are being prepared for you! This day is open to everyone! Contact your deacons for more information or visit www.diaconalministries.com to register.
- Oct 16, 17** Duncan Christian School 50th Anniversary. Contact: development@duncanchristianschool.ca or 250-746-3654 ext. 292 See ad.
- Oct 17** Dutch Service will be held in the **Ancaster** Christian Reformed Church at 3:00 p.m. Rev. Ralph Koops will be preaching.
- Oct 20** Leendert Kooij and his O.C.M.A. Choir will do a benefit concert for Eurovangelism/EuroAid at the Hebron Christian Reformed Church in **Whitby**. We invite you to join us for a great evening! Please call us at 1-866-630-6301 for more info.
- Oct 23** Leendert Kooij and his O.C.M.A. Choir will do a benefit concert for Eurovangelism/EuroAid at St. George's Anglican Church in **Guelph**. We invite you to join us for a great evening! Please call us at 1-866-630-6301 for more info.
- Oct 29** Pastor Herman Praamsma retirement celebration at Heritage Fellowship CRC, Brampton, ON. For information contact L. van Ginkel at 905-796-3196 or lvanginkel@sympatico.ca See ad Sep. 13 issue.
- Nov 5** Christian Festival Concert 7:30 pm, Roy Thomson Hall, **Toronto**. See ad.

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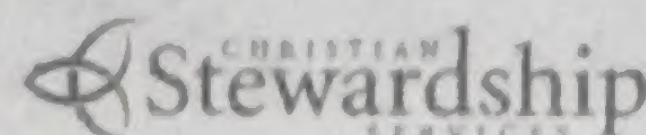
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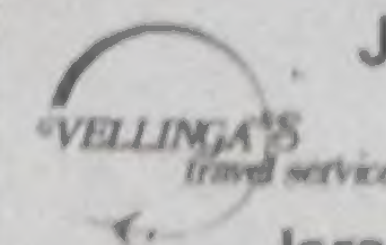
Saturday, October 17:

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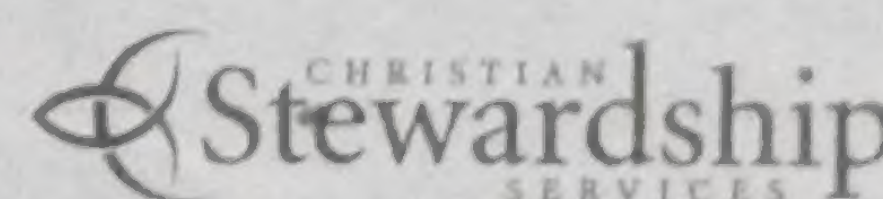
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News

From broken legs to redeemed in Christ

Gary Timmerman

A year ago, Dima was a young apprentice carpenter, working for a small firm which assembles countryside cottages (*dachas* in Russian). A slip from the ladder, and Dima became a victim of an irresponsible employer who threw him to the wind. Even his common-law wife and his brother could not see the hope of bearing with him along the road to recovery.

Dima grew dependent on heroin during his four months in the hospital bed and on crutches. The best his older brother could offer him, since he did not want his kids to see their "disgusting uncle" bed-ridden and helpless, was to call up Good Samaritan Ministries, a rehab program he learned about from a street-side poster on a building wall in town. The rehab ministry of the Baptist Union of the Leningrad region is really a second start in life for Dima. During eight months there, Dima beat his drug addiction and found new meaning in life. He was surrounded by the care of devoted and loving workers at "Good Samaritan" and within the nearby Tikhvin Baptist community. In June, he began a three-month period of "adaptation", living away from the rehab center and closer to general society. Now he's working a construction job for a Christian who runs a small construction company. Dima has five more weeks left in adaptation. What should he do with his life?

I met Dima this summer, mid-way through his adaptation. A highlight of our visit was gathering with other guys in the adaptation program, along with my brother-in-law Pastor Maxim, to share testimonies of God's redemption in our lives and what we're trying to do for Christ today. The experience was uplifting for Dima and his comrades. New friends indeed!

A bridge of books

Galya and I travelled last weekend to support missionary Slava, who leads in Dima's region. Christian literature is one of the contributions that Christian Reformed World Missions (CRWM) is making to the missionary projects of our Baptist partners, including Vychoslav's ("Slava" for short) ministry where Dima is being discipled. A multi-confessional Christian library of over 1,000 titles has been set up in the rented ministry center there, and we are finding it to be successful hook to engage with many unbelievers about the Gospel.

Each Saturday since May, Vychoslav brings Dima and the other rehab guys to witness for the Lord at the center. The first part of the day is spent at a folding table of books at the central town market. Hundreds of passers-by glance over to the new table, and the Lord directs to them those



Gary and Maxim with Tikhvin adaptees.



Dima



Expanded Boksitogorsk library.

persons of peace whose hearts are open to God. Their town library has not a single religious book. A month ago, however, during our



Street-side evangelism.

library advertising blitz, Vychoslav gained an invitation from the library director to meet again in September to plan a Christian literature exhibition there. Each Saturday three or four new registered readers learn about Slava's ministry center and doors are opening to bring the Good News into their homes and families.

After lunch, we go out in twos to witness. Galya very capably mentored a young lady missionary in the winsome approaches of street-witnessing – they had two intensive discussions with satisfied listeners. I formed a team with Dima and our wandering had two highlights. A good round of conversation with a group of eight young people drinking beer near the bus stop reminded me how all age groups of the Russian population are steeped in problems around alcohol. Some reluctance to accept a New Testament dissipated when Dima shared more of his addiction journey, until eventually all of them accepted his "Choose Life" business card. Later we chatted a half hour with

an older lady, a lonely pensioner and atheist, who gave us a rigorous exercise in defending our Christian faith. Dima did really well for being a fresh believer, and I had opportunity to boast to the listeners about God's work in this young man. All wished him well! This is the kind of role I play – encouraging the local Christian missionaries in their ministry, as much on the front line as I can be, but never enough.



Gary Timmerman has been Christian Reformed World Missions' missionary in Russia since 2000. He and his wife Galina (Galya) live in St. Petersburg, Russia.

See page 16 for *Odds & Trends* column.

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